SPECIAL ISSUE

Montana Outdoors

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JULY -AUGUST 2022

MONTANA OUTDOORS
NEXT 100
SPECIAL ISSUE

More things to see, do, and learn to fully experience Montana's outdoor life.

Montana Outdoors
JULY–AUGUST 2022

THE NEXT 100

More things to see, do, and learn to fully experience Montana's outdoor life

In 2013, *Montana Outdoors* published a special issue listing our recommendations for the "Best 100" things to see, do, and learn to fully experience Montana's mountains, rivers, state parks, trails, wildlife, and fisheries*. It has been our most popular issue in the magazine's 51-year history.

Over the past decade, we've continued to discover wonderful outdoor places and experiences worth sharing. And readers have sent their own suggestions. Now we're featuring another 100.

This "Next 100" issue embodies the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks motto The Outside Is in Us All. At FWP, we recognize that almost everyone who lives in and visits the Treasure State wants to connect with the natural world. Many do that by hunting or fishing. Others go hiking, backpacking, kayaking, mountain biking, or wildlife watching. Some just find a scenic place to pull off the road and watch the sun set. It's all good, as long as you don't litter, trespass, or degrade the experiences of others also trying to enjoy the outdoors.

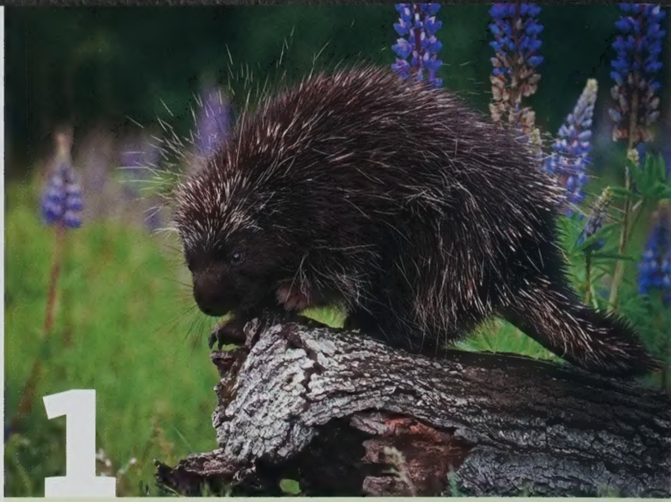
At *Montana Outdoors*, we aim to foster more of these natural connections. We want people to learn how FWP manages fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation and also discover how to see and experience the sites and activities that make Montana a world-class destination.

As with the first list, we tried not to reveal anyone's "secret" spots or highlight experiences that could be ruined by additional visitation. But all of us, even Montana natives, have learned about new places and activities over the years from magazines, guidebooks, and online resources. This is a big state, and even though more people are visiting and moving here each year, there are still countless places for all of us to explore and discover.

—Tom Dickson, Editor

We've included the Best 100 list on page 57. Read the entire Best 100 issue by scanning the QR code at right or visiting **issuu.com/montanaoutdoors/docs/montanaoutdoors100best*

COVER PHOTO: Devil's Glen on the Dearborn River. See number 75, page 44. Photo by Chuck Haney.



1

See a porcupine

Porcupines are such unique creatures that everyone should see one in the wild at least once in their life. Though traditionally considered forest dwellers, these large rodents have, for reasons unknown, disappeared almost entirely from western Montana's mountains. These days most porcupines are found waddling along lower-elevation foothills and the prairies east of the Continental Divide.

When: Year round.

Where: In eastern Montana, look for porcupines in draws and ravines, where they feed on the inner bark of elms, plains cottonwoods, skunkbush sumac, and chokecherries. They are usually found high in a tree or tall bush or slowly trudging across a prairie from one ravine to another.

- *Suggested by Cameron T. Wilson, Great Falls*
- Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Where Have All the Porcupines Gone?" March-April 2015.

Where Have All the Porcupines Gone?

Montana Outdoors

FIRST PLACE MAGAZINE:
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Association for Conservation Information

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2 Take a whitewater rafting day trip

It may seem more of a tourist activity, but whitewater rafting is also a fun summer outing for residents who want to see rivers at their wildest. The top river-rafting day trips offered by commercial operators are on the Clark Fork River at Alberton Gorge, Gallatin River south of Bozeman, Middle and North forks of the Flathead River, upper Yellowstone River at Gardiner, Stillwater River, and the Madison River's Bear Trap Canyon.

When: Summer.

Where: Rivers throughout central and western Montana.

* * *

3 Catch crappies at Tongue River Reservoir State Park

Montana doesn't offer nearly as much panfish angling (perch, sunfish, and crappies) as states farther east, but many Treasure State ponds, lakes, and reservoirs hold these tasty species, especially in the state's eastern half. Visit FishMT at fwp.mt.gov/fish and search "Query reports and data" for the panfish species you're after. For instance, a search for "yellow perch" in FWP's Region 1 (northwestern Montana) turns up 77 different waterbodies.

Some of the state's best crappie fishing is at Tongue River State Park on Tongue River Reservoir, near the Wyoming border just east of the Crow Indian Reservation. For conditions and fishing and camping information, visit the Tongue River Marina page at facebook.com/TongueRiverMarina/or call the state park office at 406-757-2298.

When: Late spring (late May through mid-June), when crappies move to shallow water and can be caught from shore, or in midwinter when they are taken through the ice.

Where: Tongue River State Park is roughly 60 driving miles southeast of Hardin.

▸ *Suggested by Fergus Phillips, Glendive*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK; NPS; JOHN LAMBING; JACK BALLARD

4

Visit Natural Bridge Falls

Montana isn't famous for waterfalls, but some of ours—like Natural Bridge Falls, south of Big Timber—are spectacular. That waterfall forms where the Boulder River flows over a 105-foot precipice during spring runoff. During low water, the river travels underground through eroded channels carved by eons of water pressure and erupts from the rock cliffs below the falls. The reemergence looks as if the river is bursting out of the cliff edge. A natural limestone bridge over the river, which gave the waterfall its name, collapsed in 1988 and was replaced by a lovely wooden bridge that allows visitors to cross the roaring river. This U.S. Forest Service recreation site is also the trailhead for the Green Mountain Trail and offers accessible paved trails, picnic tables, and interpretive panels explaining local geology.

When: Year round, but the best viewing is July through April when water levels are lower.

Where: The falls is 25 miles south of Big Timber on Highway 298.

▸ *Suggested by Gerald Eswein, Wisconsin Rapids, WI*

5 Go snowmobiling

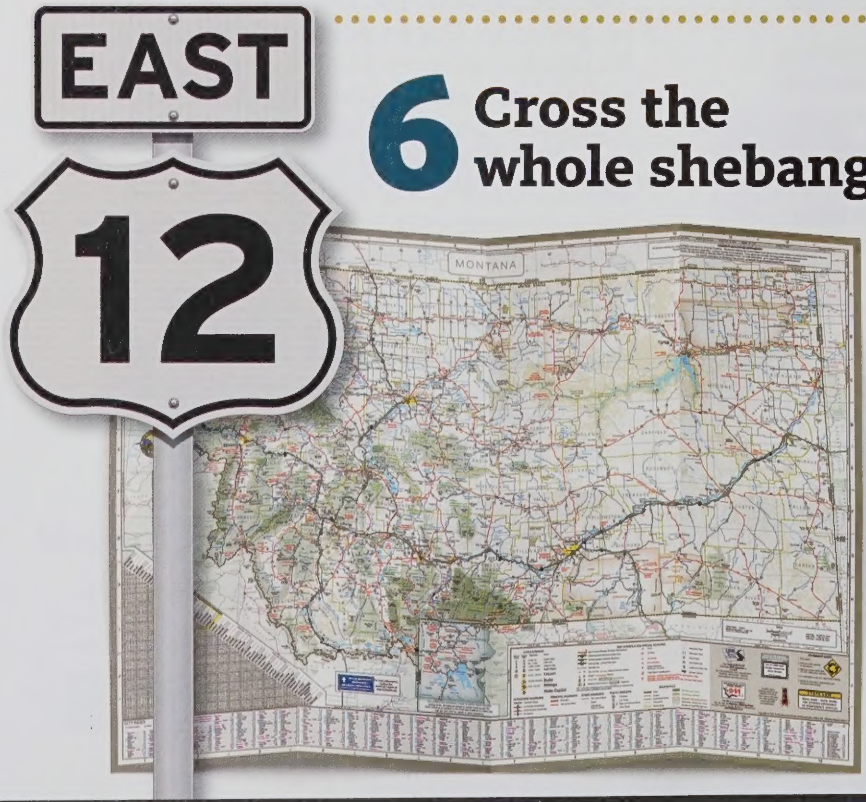
Montana's scenic mountains may be even more spectacular in the winter. But not everyone can or wants to cross-country ski or snowshoe into the backcountry to view them up close. For some people, a snowmobile can be a great way to see winter sights. Western Montana is home to more than 4,000 miles of groomed trails, many of them maintained using federal gas tax funds administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The epicenter of snow sled action is the town of Seeley Lake, though Libby, Cooke City, West Yellowstone, Red Lodge, and Whitefish also are hotbeds of epic snow zone action.

When: Winter.

Bonus: Enter Yellowstone National Park at West Yellowstone to see bison, elk, and thermal features during your ride. Many special regulations apply, including requirements of quiet, low-emission four-stroke engines only.

▸ *Suggested by Doug Larson, Plymouth, MN*

6 Cross the whole shebang



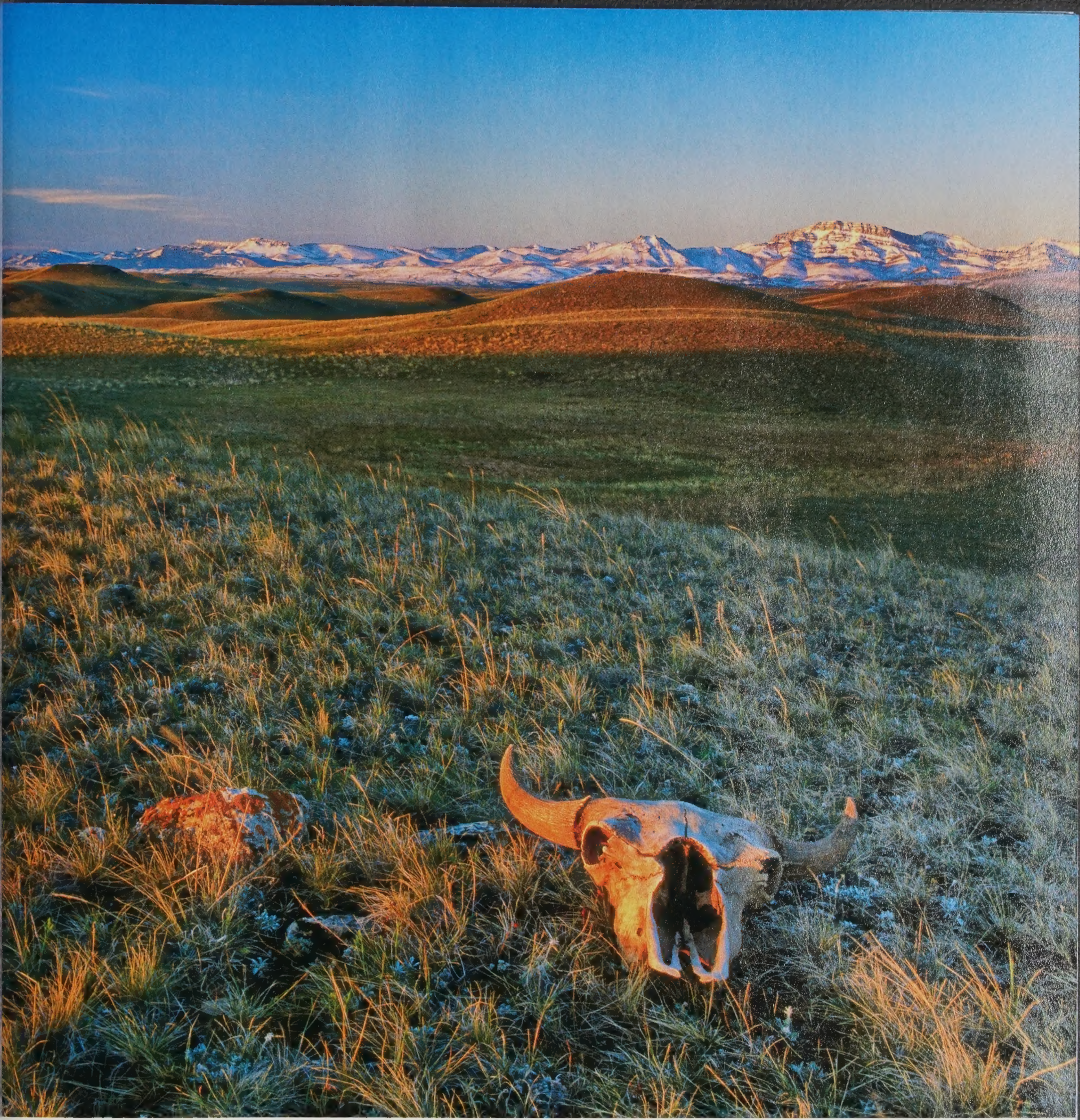
To fully comprehend Montana's massive size and incredible geographic diversity, drive from one end of the state to the other. Skip the less-scenic I-94/90 route and take either U.S. Highway 2 along Montana's Hi-Line, Montana Highway 200, or U.S. Highway 12 (which includes a stretch of freeway between Garrison and Lolo).

When: Anytime.

Where: From North Dakota to Idaho or vice versa.

▸ *Suggested by Conrad Martin, Glasgow*

LEFT TO RIGHT: KEN TAKATA; JOHN LAMBING



7 Find a bison skull

Before market hunters nearly exterminated the species, millions of bison roamed the northern Great Plains. The massive grazers often drowned trying to cross rivers swollen with snowmelt. The carcasses then washed downstream, sometimes becoming embedded in riverbanks. Ever since, high water that erodes banks has exposed these browned skulls to floaters who know where to look. Skulls also occasionally show up elsewhere. Collecting is legal on public land and allows you to own a piece of Western history.

When: After floods that expose riverbanks.

Where: Central and eastern Montana along the Marias, Missouri, Yellowstone, Bighorn, Tongue, and Milk rivers.

▸ *Suggested by Ed Phillips, Spokane, WA; and Brandon Gould, Ulm*

8 See the massive bighorn sheep at Wil

There are many reasons to visit this 2,000-acre island—a unit of Flathead Lake State Park—including its namesake feral horses and a network of trails offering spectacular views of the largest natural lake west of the Mississippi River. But the main attraction these days is a herd of bighorn sheep carrying some of the largest horns ever seen. In 2018, the headgear of a nine-year-old ram that died of natural causes was certified as the new world record. Horns of two other rams that died on the island in recent years have ranked in the top 10.

The only way to reach Wild Horse Island is by canoe, kayak, or motorboat, all of which can be rented nearby. If the lake is calm, paddlers can reach the island in about an hour from Big Arm State Park or the dock at Big Arm Boat Rentals.

LEFT TO RIGHT: CHRIS AUCH; SHUTTERSTOCK

Horse Island

When: Flathead Lake is open for boating spring, summer, and fall. The best paddling is in summer.

Where: Northwest of Polson.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Wet and Wild," July-August 2019.

9 Learn to identify 20 trees and shrubs

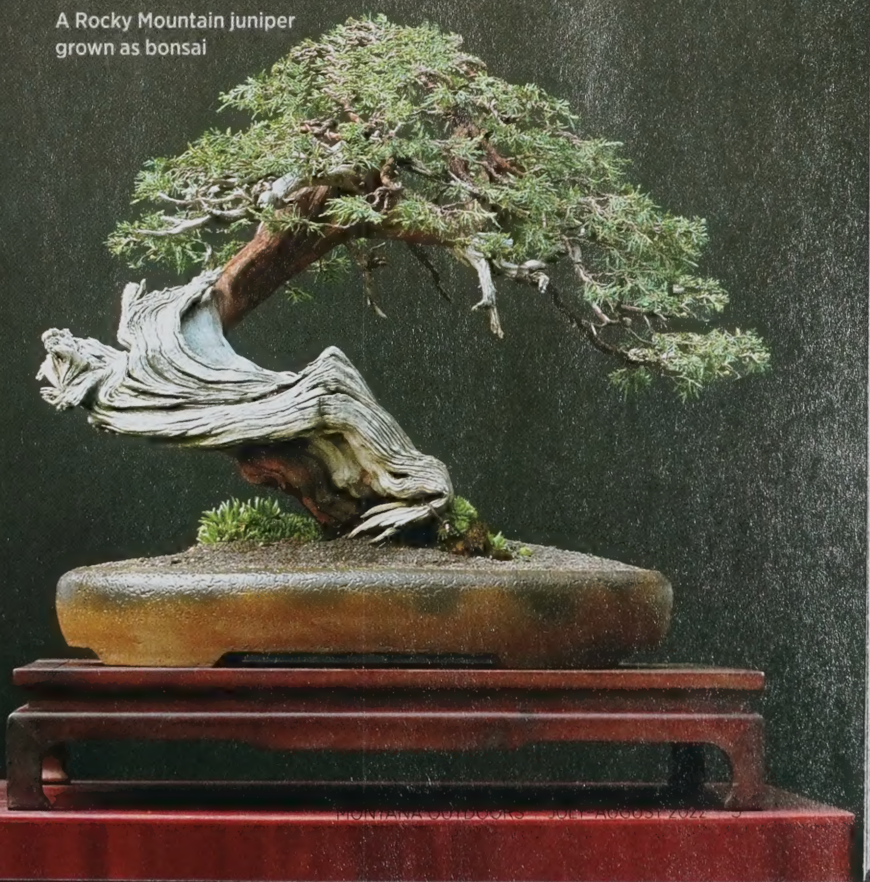
Because trees and shrubs are the most prominent living things in Montana's outdoors, people who spend much time outside might want to learn the names of at least some. Here are 10 common species for each side of the Continental Divide:

WEST	EAST
Lodgepole pine	Silver buffaloberry
Ponderosa pine	Cottonwood (narrow or plains)
Douglas fir	Common chokecherry
Western larch	Green ash
Western white pine	Antelope bitterbrush
Engelmann spruce	Red-twig dogwood
Thin-leafed alder	Wax currant
Rocky Mountain juniper	Rabbitbrush
Black cottonwood	Big sage
Quaking aspen	Snowberry

When: The best time to ID deciduous trees and shrubs is in late summer and early fall, when leaves are turning. For conifers, anytime.

Where: Statewide.

Reference: *Plants of the Rocky Mountains* (pages 25–81) by Lone Pine Publishing.



A Rocky Mountain juniper grown as bonsai

10 Swim in Brush Lake in August

You're driving across sweltering northeastern Montana in late summer. The radio says it's 100 degrees out, your AC is on the blink, and you can't see a shade tree anywhere on the vast flat expanse of dusty wheat stubble. Then it appears, like an oasis in a desert: blue, cool, spring-fed Brush Lake. Established as Montana's 50th state park in 2005, Brush Lake has been cooling off sweaty visitors for thousands of years. Native people visited the lake regularly, and in the early 1900s local residents used the surrounding pasture for open-air revivals, baseball games, and concerts. Today, the lake's chilly water and sandy beach provide relief for residents of nearby Dagmar, Medicine Lake, Froid, and Plentywood, as well as the occasional intrepid tourist willing to deviate from U.S. Highway 2, 40 miles south.

When: The lake is most refreshing from July through September. August is peak.

Where: The state park is near the North Dakota border, 31 miles southeast of Plentywood.

▸ *Suggested by Martin and Ann Smith, Bozeman*

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Oasis on the Prairie," September-October 2005.

FROM TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; ANDY AUSTIN/MONTANA STATE PARKS

11 Spot a loon

The common loon is one of the world's great waterbirds. These handsome black-and-white goose-size piscivores that survive only in cold, clean water epitomize the pristine north country. Despite the growing threats of shoreline residential development and increased watercraft use, which can destroy nesting sites or drive loons off their nests, Montana is home to 75 to 100 territorial pairs, the largest loon population in the West. You need to see one.

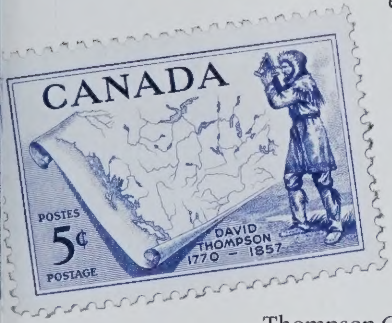
When: Look for breeding loon pairs in midsummer. In spring and fall, migrating loons heading to or from Canadian lakes make stops at Montana's Canyon Ferry, Fort Peck, and Clark Canyon reservoirs.

Where: According to the Montana Loon Society, the highest concentrations of nesting loons are in the larger lakes of the Clearwater drainage (east of Missoula) and the Tobacco-Stillwater drainage (from Kalispell north to Eureka), as well as in lakes in Glacier National Park.

▸ *Suggested by Barbara Flanagan, Whitefish*

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Crazy about Loons," July-August 2011.

12 Learn about David Thompson

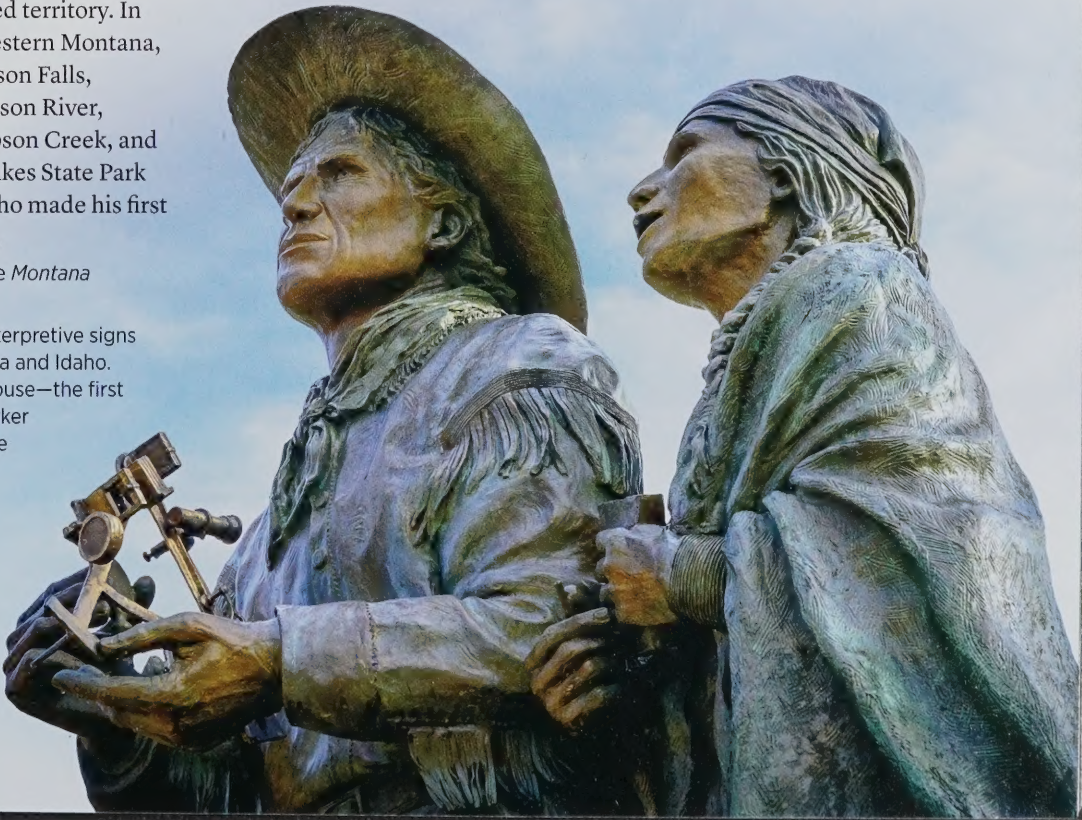


Lewis and Clark made an incredible journey, but their expedition paled next to those of David Thompson, the British-Canadian explorer who mapped today's northwestern Montana and western Canada in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Over nearly three decades, while working for the Hudson's Bay and North West companies, Thompson traveled an estimated 55,000 miles (the Lewis and Clark Expedition covered about 5,000 miles) to survey lands and waters and eventually produce a map covering nearly 2.5 million square miles of previously uncharted territory. In northwestern Montana, Thompson Falls, Thompson River, Thompson Creek, and Thompson Chain of Lakes State Park are all named after the intrepid explorer, who made his first trip into the Canadian wilderness at age 16.

When: Learn all about this remarkable man in the *Montana Outdoors* article link below.

Where: Oddly, there are almost no markers or interpretive signs indicating Thompson's 1808 journey into Montana and Idaho. Near today's Thompson Falls, he built Saleesh House—the first Montana trading post west of the Rockies. A marker there pays tribute to Thompson, and the Heritage Museum in Libby (406-293-7521) has a David Thompson exhibit. But that's it.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Incredible Journeys," March-April 2007.



Statue of David Thompson and his Métis wife, Charlotte Small, in Invermere, British Columbia

13

Go mountain biking

People have been riding bicycles off-road ever since two-wheelers were invented in the early 1800s. In Montana, mountain biking dates to 1896, when the Black soldiers of the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps traversed dirt roads and wagon trails from Missoula to Yellowstone National Park and back to test the devices for military use. The next year they rode from Missoula to St. Louis, Missouri.

Today Montana is considered one of the world's great mountain biking destinations. Helena, for instance, is one of only 15 International Mountain Bicycling Association Silver-Level Ride Centers. The most notable fat tire routes in Big Sky Country include:

- Mount Helena Ridge Trail
- Bozeman's Bangtail Divide Trail
- Butte's Beaver Ponds Trail
- Big Sky's Grizzly Loop
- Whitefish Trail
- Great Falls' South Shore Trail
- Missoula's Rattlesnake Loop

When: Summer through late fall; avoid spring, when trails are muddy.

Where: The best trails are near Montana's larger cities and towns.

▸ *Suggested by Carmen Schmitz, Belgrade*

LEFT TO RIGHT: SHUTTERSTOCK; NPS

Rocky Mountain tailed frog, Glacier National Park.

THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT

14 Find evidence of Montana's "West Coast"

It's hard to believe, but at one time northern Idaho and northwestern Montana were the continent's western seashore. Then, tens of millions of years ago, islands floating in the Pacific Ocean drifted east and stacked up against Idaho to form Oregon and Washington and a new Pacific Coast. Evidence of this amazing geological transformation is found in many animals and plants of northern Idaho and western Montana, such as the Rocky Mountain tailed frog, Lolo mayfly, and Coeur d'Alene salamander, which are also found along the coastal rainforests of Washington, Oregon, and California.

When: The best time to visit northwestern Montana's rainforests is in summer.

Where: Amphibians and other signs of what's known as the Northern Rocky Mountain Refugium can be seen in any of the inland rainforests of western Montana, from Glacier National Park west through the Kootenai National Forest.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "The Land that Time Forgot," March-April 2011.

15

Join a conservation organization

One of the most effective and rewarding ways to help keep Montana's outdoors healthy and accessible is to join or contribute to a local, state, or national conservation group. Most provide timely information on legislation, topical issues, group outings, and meetings as well as opportunities for hands-on habitat restoration work.

When: Join today.

Montana Conservation Corps members build an artificial beaver dam near Winifred to raise water levels and restore habitat in surrounding grasslands, where sage-grouse chicks find insects in midsummer.

Elkhorn State Park

16 Explore a ghost town

Walking though one of Montana's ghost towns inspires the imagination unlike any other experience. Hear the player piano tinkling in the music hall, miners cursing in saloons, and horses whinnying at the livery. Like visiting an old one-room schoolhouse or rural cemetery, a stroll through a once-thriving-but-now-abandoned mining or farming town links visitors to a time when most Montanans worked outdoors. Three of Montana's most intact ghost towns—Bannack, Elkhorn, and Granite—are state parks. Other notable spirit burgs include: Coloma, Marysville, Rimini, Castle Town, Comet, Garnet, Virgelle, Giltedge, Kendall, Fort Assinniboine, Nevada City, and Virginia City.

When: Year round for some, but those in remote mountains can be reached only in summer.

Where: An interactive map of dozens of Montana ghost towns is at ghosttowns.com/states/mt/moalpha.html.

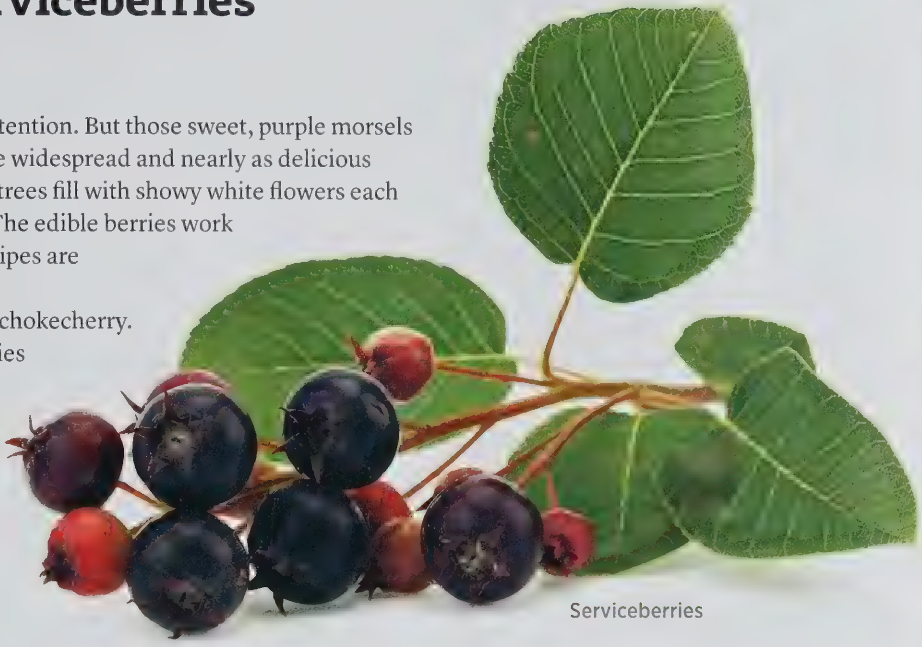
▸ *Suggested by Ben and Linda Neumann, Madison, WI*

FROM TOP: MONTANA CONSERVATION CORPS; [illegible] TIN/MONTANA STATE PARKS

17 Pick a bucket of serviceberries or chokecherries

Of Montana's native fruits, huckleberries get the most attention. But those sweet, purple morsels grow only in the state's mountainous western third. More widespread and nearly as delicious are serviceberries. Branches of the large shrubs or small trees fill with showy white flowers each spring, then droop as they fill with fruit in late summer. The edible berries work well in syrups, jellies, jam, wine, and pie, and in most recipes are interchangeable with huckleberries or blueberries.

Another widespread fruit-bearing shrub or tree is the chokecherry. Though chokecherries are far more tart than serviceberries and contain poisonous seeds, the juice (with plenty of added sugar or honey) makes delicious syrup and jelly. Native Americans traditionally crushed both fruits to make pemmican.


Serviceberries

When: July through September.

Where: Serviceberries are found statewide in areas of high to moderate moisture. Chokecherries are even more widespread and often grow along roadsides.

How: Several Montana and Rocky Mountain plant guidebooks offer easy tips for identifying these plants.

▸ *Suggested by Mike Getman, Lewistown*

18 Attend an Indian powwow

Powwows are sacred social gatherings and celebrations held each year by the tribes on Montana's seven Indian reservations. Families camp in tents, trailers, or traditional tepees and join in multiday ceremonies, singing, drumming, and competitive dancing. The largest powwows in Montana are North American Indian Days on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation and Crow Fair on the Crow Indian Reservation. Members of the general public, including children, are welcome, though visitors need to follow a few basic powwow rules:

- Stand up for the Grand Entry.
- Ask permission before taking a photograph of someone.
- Don't sit in seats near the front, which are reserved for dancers and singers.
- No alcohol, drugs, or firearms.

When: Visit any reservation website to learn when its annual powwow takes place.

Where: Montana's seven Indian reservations.

▸ *Suggested by Roger Madplume, Billings*

Heart Butte Indian Days Powwow is held each year on the Blackfeet Reservation.

19 Hike the CDT

Completing the 3,000-mile Continental Divide Scenic Trail is one of the world's great hiking feats, but covering even a portion of the route is worth adding to your bucket list. The whole trip (one-way) usually takes five months, with hikers starting at the Mexican border in April and finishing in Glacier National Park in late August before the snow flies. A handful of superhuman hikers have actually "yo-yoed" the CDT, making a *round-trip* expedition in one year!

When: In Montana, July through September.

Where: Access the famous route northwest of Helena in the Helena–Lewis and Clark National Forest at MacDonald, Rogers, Flesher, Stemple, or Priest passes. An easy 4- to 10-mile out-and-back day trip can be done from Benchmark Trailhead west of Augusta, hiking the CDT north or south as it parallels the South Fork of the Sun River.

THE GREATEST DIVIDE

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL
CDT
NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "The Greatest Divide," November-December 2019.

20 Bike the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route

Biking the Great Divide Route in Montana.

The counterpart to hiking the Continental Divide Trail is pedaling this epic 2,800-mile route from Banff, Alberta, to Antelope Wells, New Mexico. The route was developed and mapped in 1997 by the Missoula-based Adventure Cycling Association. It "follows the Continental Divide and is 90 percent off-pavement using high-quality dirt roads, gravel roads, trails, and a few short sections of unmaintained tracks," according to the group's website. "Bikepacking the GDMBR requires only intermediate off-road mountain biking skills, but it is a painstaking test of endurance based on the sheer scale of the route, with over 200,000 feet (60,960 meters) of elevation gain and loss."

No time to ride the entire route? Get a taste by pedaling part of the mostly rural 726-mile portion in Montana. The Polaris-to-Lima stretch is especially scenic.

When: Spring, summer, fall.

Where: Maps and more at bikepacking.com.

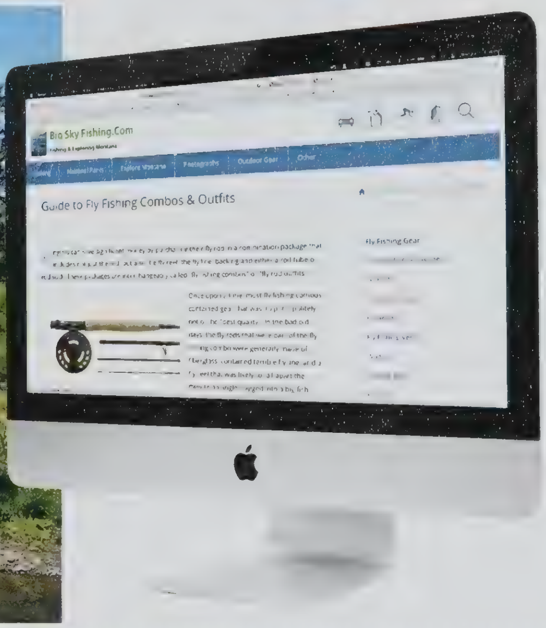
FROM TOP: DEE LINNELL BLANK; SHUTTERSTOCK; CHUCK HANEY

21 Visit bigskyfishing.com

The internet is packed with great sites offering tons of information on Montana's outdoors. We consider bigskyfishing.com the best of the best. In more than 6,000 pages of content, the exhaustive site covers scenic drives, Montana cities and towns, and, of course, fishing—from streams and rivers to reservoirs and mountain lakes. The webmaster, Jim Hug, writes that he first began developing the site in 2002 "due to my love of Montana, fly fishing, travel and photography." The site also includes extensive photo galleries (all photos taken by Hug, such as the shot of the Shields River in Park County below) and tips on buying outdoor gear.

When: Anytime.

Where: bigskyfishing.com.



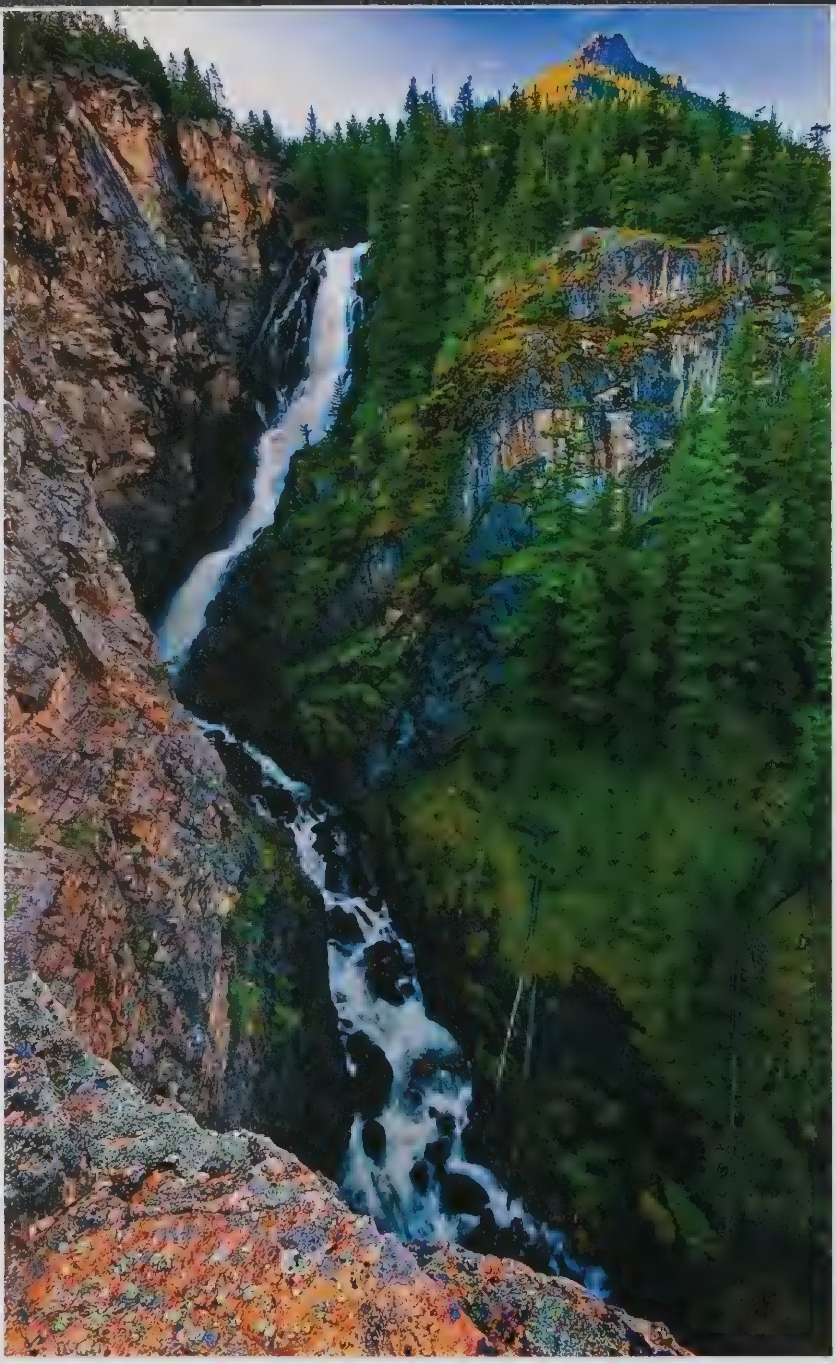
22

Visit the Museum of the Plains Indian

Thousands of years of Plains Indian culture is on display at this facility on the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning. Founded in 1941, the museum contains art, clothing, horse gear, weapons, household implements, baby carriers, and toys of Northern Plains tribal peoples including the Blackfeet, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Sioux, Assiniboine, Arapaho, Shoshone, Nez Perce, Flathead, Chippewa, and Cree. The U.S. Department of the Interior's Indian Arts and Crafts Board runs the operation.

When: Call 406-338-2230 for current days and hours of operation.

Where: Browning.



23

Hike to Woodbine Falls

Woodbine Falls is among Montana's tallest waterfalls and one of the easiest to visit (once you drive to the out-of-the-way trailhead). Located south of Nye in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, the 280-foot waterfall is less than a 1-mile hike from Woodbine Campground.

When: Spring, summer, and fall.

Where: Follow Highway 419 south through Absarokee, past Nye and the Stillwater Mine to Woodbine Campground.

▸ *Suggested by Richard Anderson, Shepherd*

WOODBINE FALLS: MOSTLY MONTANA

24

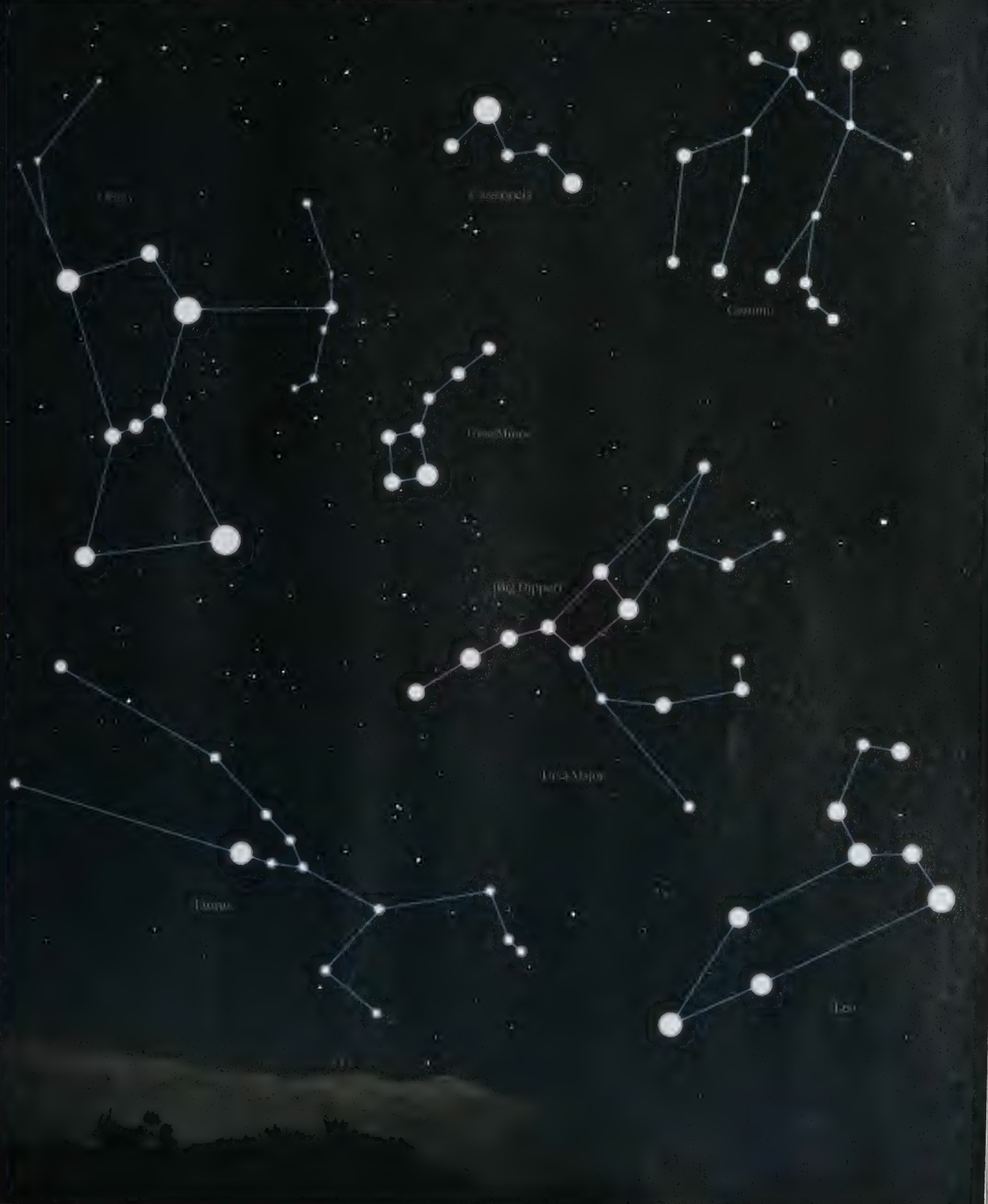
People who love the outdoors ought to know a bit about the night sky, for after-hours navigation and because we humans have been pondering its wonders for thousands of years. Constellations are groups of stars creating recognizable patterns traditionally named after their apparent form or identified with a mythological figure. Seven basic constellations are Ursa Major (Great Bear, which includes the Big Dipper), Ursa Minor (Little Bear), Leo, Cassiopeia, Orion, Taurus, and Gemini. Three planets to know by sight are Mercury, Venus, and Mars.

When: Various constellations and planets are more visible at certain times of the night and year. Search the internet for "viewing planets and constellations now" before you go.

Where: Under dark skies—away from towns and cities and light pollution—which includes most of Montana.

Mercury
Venus
Mars

earn 10 constellations and planets


Orion
Cassiopeia
Gemini
Ursa Minor
(Big Dipper)
Ursa Major
Taurus
Leo

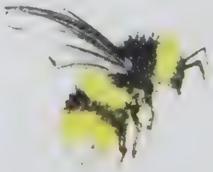
25 Learn to identify 20 native

Wildflowers (technically "forbs") are beautiful features of the outdoor landscape. Seeing them is even more enjoyable when you know what you're looking at. Here are 20 species worth knowing:

1. Pasque flower (purple or lavender)
2. Yellowbell (yellow)
3. Shooting star (purple or pink)
4. Indian paintbrush (red or yellow)
5. Forget-me-not (blue)
6. Bitterroot (pink)
7. Arrowleaf balsamroot (yellow)
8. Larkspur (purple)
9. Blanketflower (yellow)
10. Lupine (purple)

11. Prickly pear (yellow or pink)
12. Western blue iris (blue)
13. Glacier lily* (yellow)
14. Kittentail (blue or purple)
15. Beargrass* (white)
16. Harebell (purple)
17. Blazingstar (purple)
18. Wild geranium (lavender or pink)
19. Alpine aster (lavender)
20. Prairie smoke (pink)

* West of the Continental Divide only



When: Spring and summer.

Where: Various regions across Montana.

For more info: The Montana Native Plant Society's native plants poster and *Wildflowers of Montana* by Donald Anthony Schiemann.

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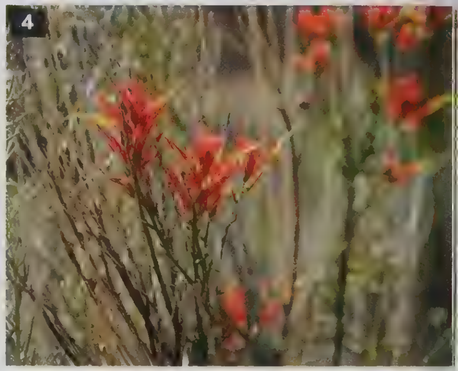

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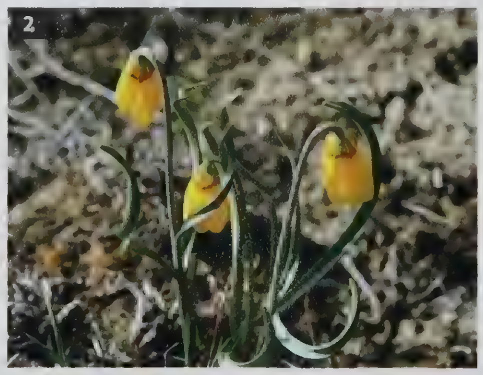

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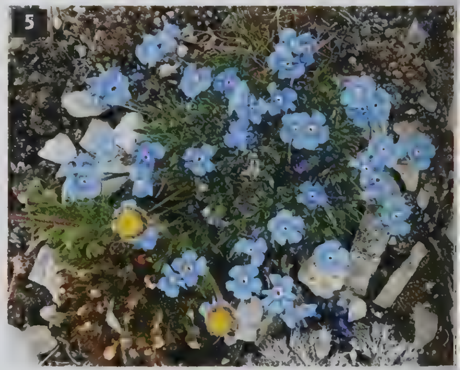

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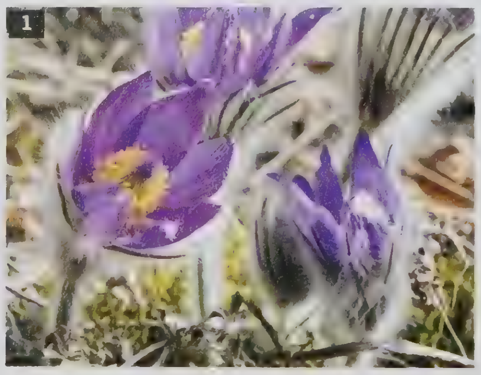

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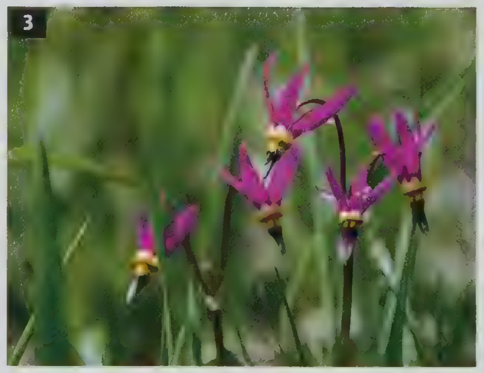

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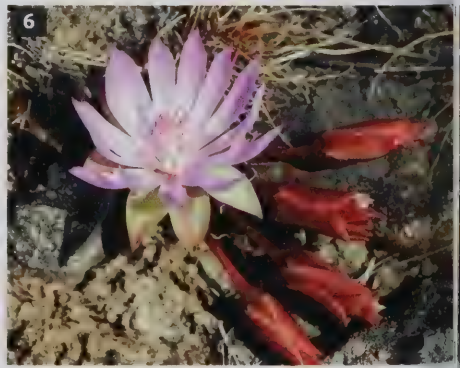

wildflowers

7

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26

Welcome turkey vultures home to Makoshika

Each spring, Makoshika State Park celebrates the return of turkey vultures to eastern Montana with Buzzard Day, a light-hearted, activities-packed tribute to this winged scavenging raptor. Buzzard Day weekend includes nature walks, 5k and 10k Buzzard Runs, music, mini-train rides, archaeology exhibits, cornhole and disc golf tournaments, and more. Contact the park at 406-377-6256 or makoshika@mt.gov.

When: Second weekend in June (June 11–12 in 2022).

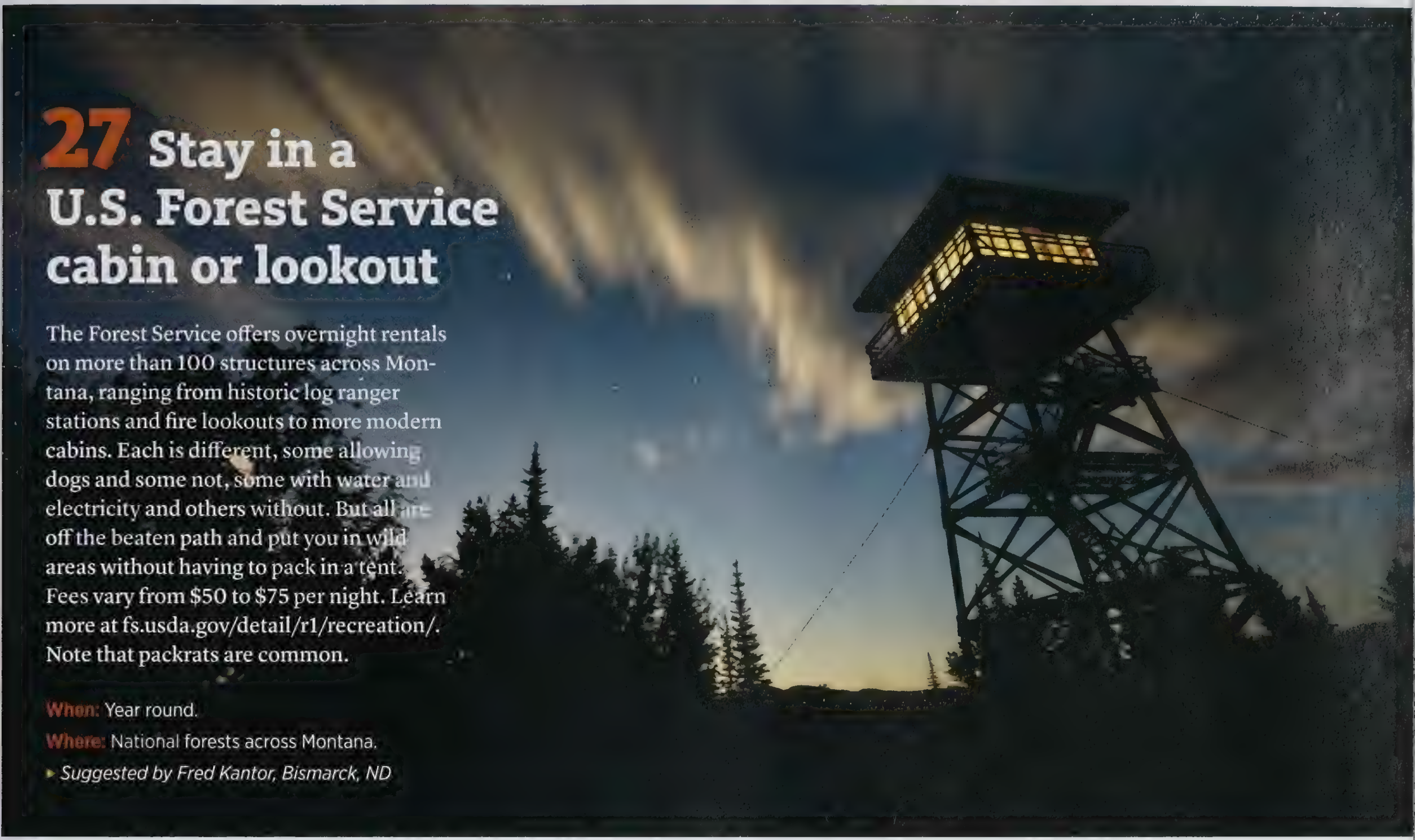
Where: 5 miles southeast of Glendive.

▸ *Suggested by Chris Nielsen, Billings*

DINO
DESTINATION

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: “Dino Destination,” September-October 2020.

PHOTO COMPOSITE BY LUKE DURAN/*MONTANA OUTDOORS*



27 Stay in a U.S. Forest Service cabin or lookout

The Forest Service offers overnight rentals on more than 100 structures across Montana, ranging from historic log ranger stations and fire lookouts to more modern cabins. Each is different, some allowing dogs and some not, some with water and electricity and others without. But all are off the beaten path and put you in wild areas without having to pack in a tent. Fees vary from $50 to $75 per night. Learn more at fs.usda.gov/detail/r1/recreation/. Note that packrats are common.

When: Year round.

Where: National forests across Montana.

▸ *Suggested by Fred Kantor, Bismarck, ND*

28 Learn to shoot (at a range)

Firearms have been a part of Montana's outdoors ever since the Corps of Discovery arrived with their Model 1795 Springfield .69-caliber muskets to hunt for deer and bison and fend off grizzly bears. Native Americans quickly adopted guns for fighting and hunting. European American market hunters used rifles to nearly eradicate bison, elk, wolves, and other big game animals and predators at the end of the 19th century.

Montanans these days use guns for hunting, target shooting, and self-defense. Learning to shoot is fun, satisfying ("Bulls-eye!"), and necessary for anyone who wants to hunt big game, upland birds, wild turkeys, or waterfowl with a firearm. Safety should always come first. Take an FWP Hunter Education class, then practice at a local shooting range, which are run by gun clubs or commercial operations.

Already know how to shoot? Philip Mason of St. Ignatius suggests learning to use a traditional muzzleloading rifle. "Enjoy this fun and exciting hunting challenge during Montana's muzzleloading rifle season in December," he says.

When: FWP online Hunter Education courses are available year round. In-person classes with certified instructors are offered across the state in spring and fall. Most shooting ranges, which require an annual membership fee, are open year round.

Where: For more information on where to find in-person Hunter Education classes, visit fwp.mt.gov/education/hunter-education. For a list of shooting ranges, go to mtssa.org/ranges/mtranges.html.

Hitting the Target

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Hitting the Target," September-October 2010.

29

Watch an osprey catch (or carry) a fish

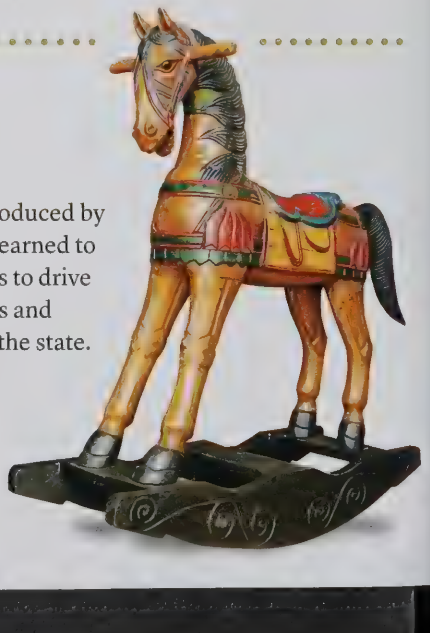
Thanks to the DDT ban, seeing an osprey is no longer a big deal in the Treasure State. The fish-eating raptors spend their summers throughout most of western Montana and are found pretty much anywhere there's clear water. (Because they feed by sight, the birds fare poorly on eastern Montana's muddy streams and rivers.) But to see one of these birds of prey carry a wiggling fish—or better yet, plunge feet first into a river or lake and emerge with the slippery prey held firm in its deeply curved talons—well, that's a sight worthy of this list.

Identify an osprey from afar by its long, narrow wings that appear broken at the "wrists," creating an M-shaped silhouette. Up close, look for the dark eye stripe extending to the back of the bird's small white head.

When: Ospreys show up in western Montana in March and leave again in early October.

Where: Look for their large stick nests, often festooned with orange or green baling twine, in trees or tall artificial platforms near Montana's major rivers, lakes, and reservoirs.

30 Ride a horse



Horses have been part of the American West since the 1700s, by which time the animals first introduced by Spanish explorers had become widespread. American Indians in what became Montana quickly learned to ride horses to hunt bison and haul their camps during seasonal movements. Cowboys rode horses to drive cattle. Settlers used them to pull covered wagons, carriages, and plows. These days, riding lessons and tours—including multiday backcountry trips—are available at dude ranches and outfitters across the state.

When: Summer and fall.

Where: Mostly in Montana's western and southern regions.

• *Suggested by Marion Taylor, Seattle, WA*

FROM TOP: KATE DAVIS; SHUTTERSTOCK

31

Follow the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

No other state claims more of the Lewis and Clark Trail than Montana. The two captains and their men covered more miles here on their epic journey (from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean and back) from 1803 to 1806, and wrote more words about their time here than anywhere else.

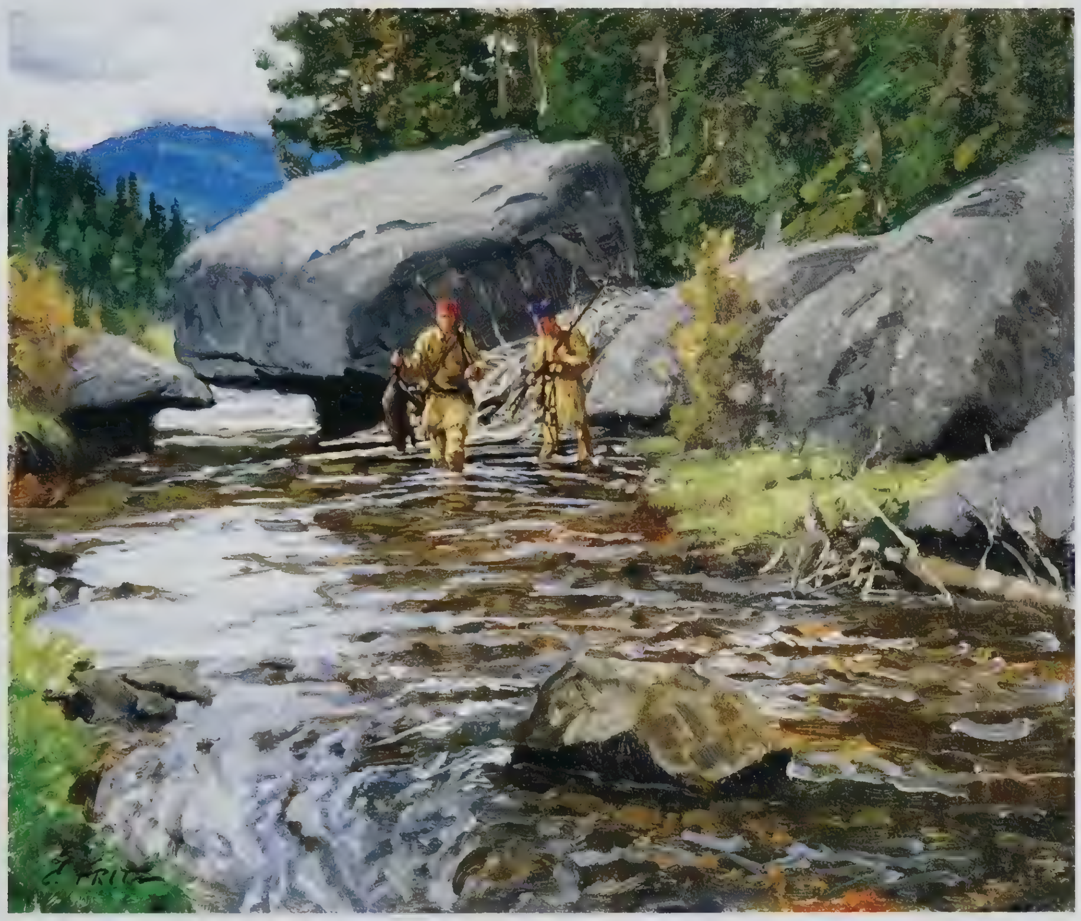
Plan a trip using the National Park Service's informative Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail website (listed below). A great place to start is at the Lewis and Clark Historic Trail Interpretive Center in Great Falls. The center features museum displays, maps, artifacts, and (on some days) Seaman, a live therapy dog named after Clark's Newfoundland. The handsomely designed building also overlooks the Great Falls of the Missouri River, one of the most significant (and troublesome) features of the expedition. Other must-see sites in Montana include the White Cliffs, Decision Point, Tower Rock, Gates of the Mountains, Three Forks of the Missouri, Beaverhead Rock, Clark's Lookout, Lemhi Pass, Ross's Hole, Travelers' Rest, Two Medicine Fight Site, Camp Disappointment, Sacajawea Peak, and Pompeys Pillar.

When: Any time of year.

Where: Visit nps.gov/lecl/planyourvisit.

Lewis and Clark in Montana

Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Lewis and Clark in Montana," March-April 2005.



Trapping Beaver, Travelers' Rest Creek, by Charles Fritz. This painting depicts the mountain stream, today known as Lolo Creek, that runs through Travelers' Rest State Park near Lolo. The Corps of Discovery camped along the stream September 9–11, 1805, and hunted, killing four deer, a beaver, and three mountain grouse. The next day the men began one of the most difficult stretches of the journey: crossing the snowy Bitterroot Mountains.

32

Find an arrowhead

For thousands of years, Indigenous people used stone-tipped arrows and spears to kill animals for food. The projectile points were made of chert, flint, or obsidian sharpened by "knapping," a process of using a stone to chip off bits of rock to expose a sharp edge. The arrowheads were then notched for attaching to wooden arrow or spear shafts.

The best spots to find arrowheads are washes, riverbanks, and recently cleared properties.

Note that it is illegal to remove any arrowheads or other Native American artifacts on federal lands and tribal reservations. If you find one, admire it and leave it be. Arrowheads found on the surface of private land—access permission required—may be removed. Arrowheads are often sold in antique stores and tribal gift shops. Just owning one is fun, whether you've found it yourself or not.

When: Any time of year.

Where: Statewide.

33 Go tent camping

It doesn't matter whether you haul your gear in a backpack, car trunk, or pickup bed. What does matter is that you pitch a tent, build a fire, draw water from a pump, and eat dinner outside. People have lived in Montana's outdoors for thousands of years, and spending a night or two sleeping under the stars (even if it's in a tent on a comfy air mattress) is an enjoyable, refreshing way to connect with those who came before us.

When: Camping in summer is more comfortable, but campgrounds are far less crowded during the April–May and September–October shoulder seasons.

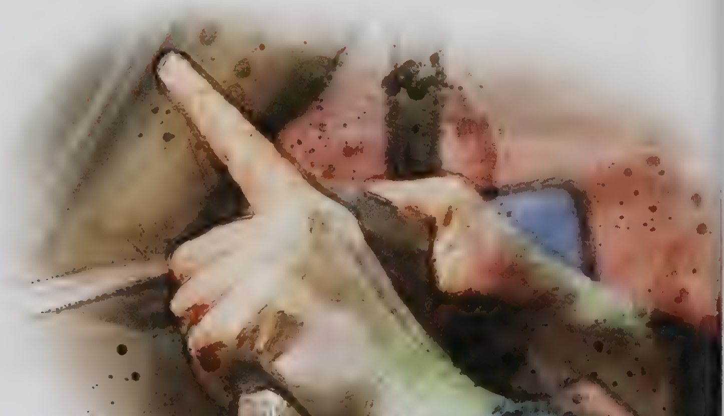
Where: Anywhere an open campfire is legal.

34 Give the one-finger wave on a rural road

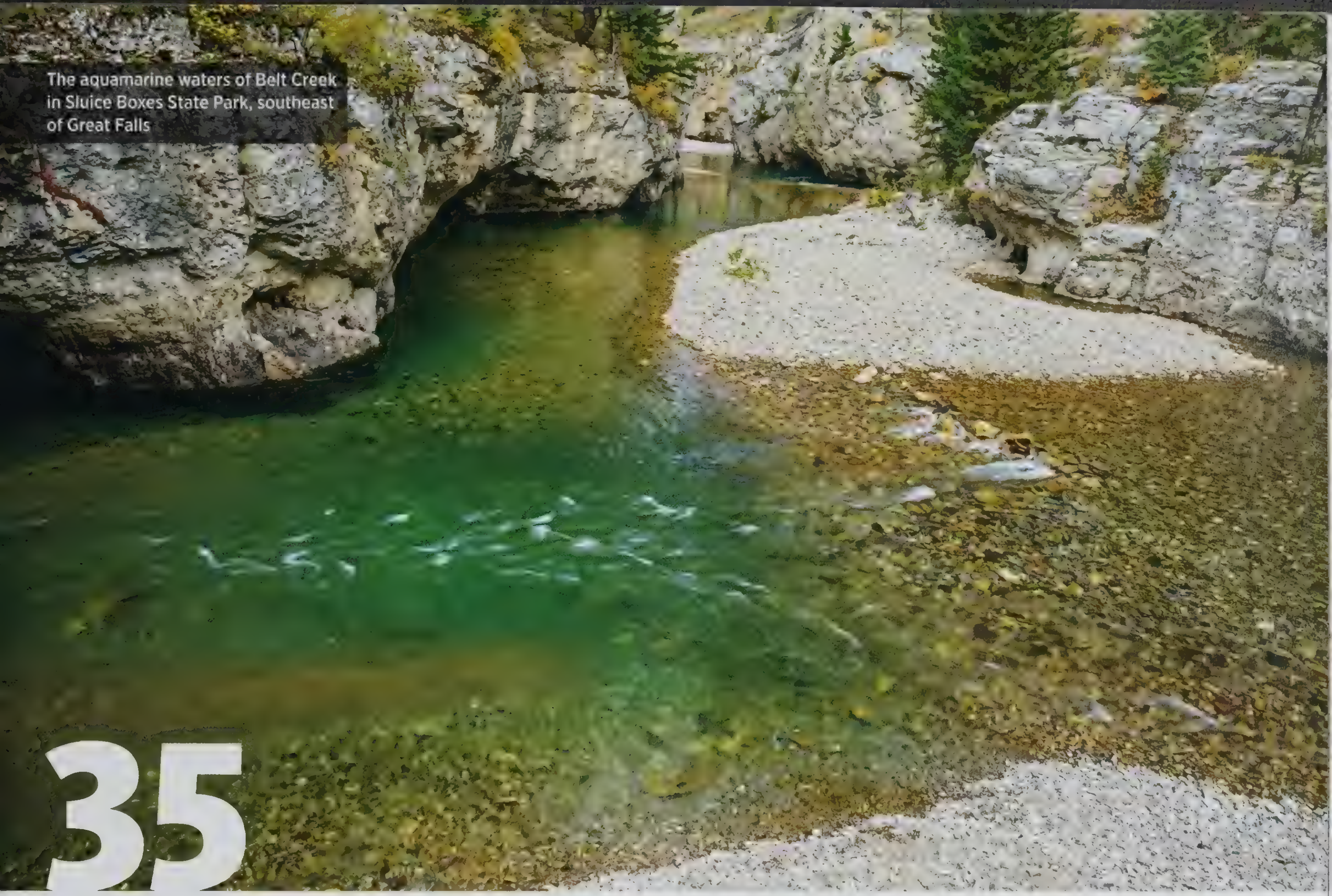
This backroads greeting offered while passing another vehicle consists of raising and lowering your index finger as your hand remains safely on the steering wheel. People in rural areas use this simple gesture to convey goodwill to fellow drivers. It basically means "Hey," and is extended only on stretches of dirt or gravel roads—never paved—far from towns or cities.

When: Anytime.

Where: On rural Montana dirt or gravel roads.



FROM TOP: ELIZA WILEY; LUKE DURAN/MONTANA OUTDOORS



The aquamarine waters of Belt Creek in Sluice Boxes State Park, southeast of Great Falls

35

Hike Belt Creek in Sluice Boxes State Park

Can't draw a permit to float the Smith River? Try hiking Belt Creek Canyon, part of Sluice Boxes State Park. Belt Creek is like a miniature Smith, with sapphire-blue pools flanked by steep limestone cliffs topped with ponderosa pines. The 7.5-mile (one way) out-and-back trail runs along the stream and requires several shallow water crossings. In addition to stunning scenery, hikers see remains of mines, mining cabins, and a rail line that, during summer weekends in the early 1900s, brought hundreds of anglers from Great Falls to the then-stocked creek (now containing wild trout only). Watch out for rattlesnakes, black bears, and poison ivy.

Warning: The trails run along several steep cliffs, so watch your kids carefully.

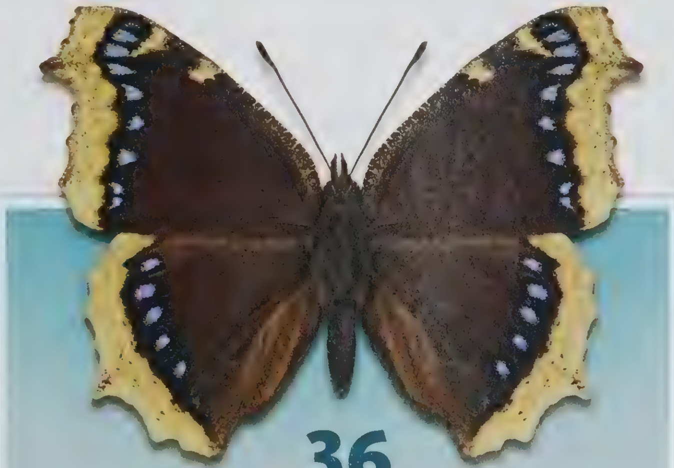
When: The park and trail are open year round, sunrise to sunset. The creek is often too high to cross in May and June, and the park is most crowded on late-summer weekends. It's particularly beautiful in mid-October.

Where: 13 miles south of Belt on U.S. Highway 89.

▸ *Suggested by Sheila Rice, Great Falls*

Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "A Grand Little Canyon." May-June 2006.

A Grand Little Canyon



36

See a mourning cloak butterfly

Designated Montana's official state butterfly by the 2001 Montana Legislature, the mourning cloak has dark brown wings (the color of mourning cloaks once worn to funerals) edged with bright blue spots and a yellow border.

When: These large butterflies with 3-inch wingspans are most active from June through September.

Where: Look for this beauty across Montana in sunny, open areas, gardens, parks, and along streams and rivers.

Go 37 cross-country skiing

There's no better way to experience Montana's outdoors in winter than by cross-country (Nordic) skiing. In addition to a great cardio workout, you get to glide silently (except for the occasional huffing and puffing) through winter forest landscapes where trees sparkle with sunlit snow. Nordic skiing comes in two styles: traditional (also known as classic or diagonal stride), in which skiers break their own trail or follow parallel grooves groomed into a snow trail; and skate skiing, which calls for shorter skis moved in a skating motion along an 8-foot-wide packed trail. A dozen ski areas across western Montana offer Nordic skiing on groomed trails. Or rent a pair of traditional skis, head to a national forest, and either follow a snow-packed road or plunge into the woods to forge your own route.

When: Winter.

Where: You can cross-country ski on public land statewide, but all Nordic ski centers are in the state's western half. Check out this blog: travelmontananow.com/cross-country-skiing-montana-guide/ or our article below.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Top Spots for Skinny Skis," November-December 2013.

TOP SPOTS for Skinny Skis

38 Start a one-match fire

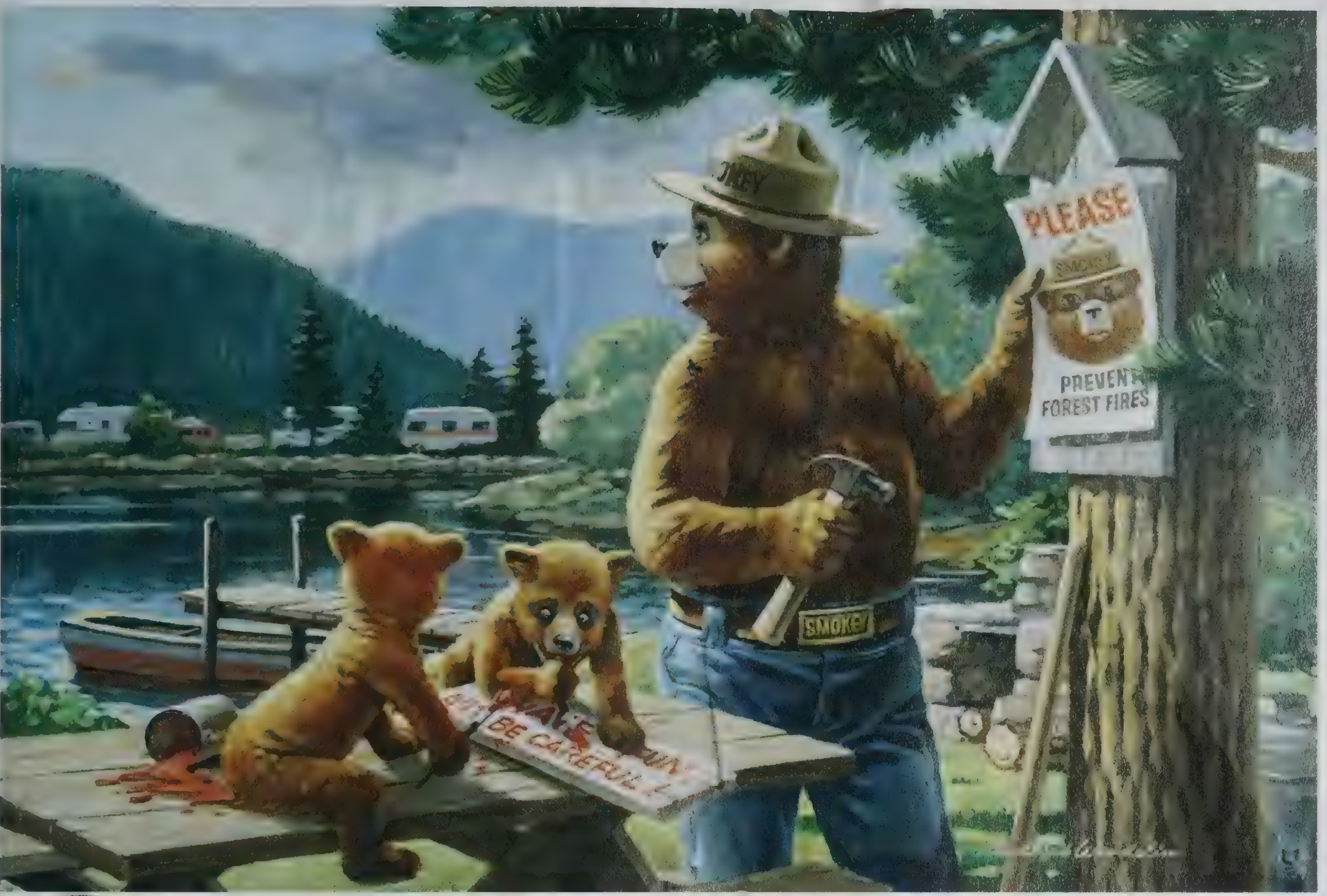
During most of the 11,000 years that people have lived in Montana, the ability to make a fire meant the difference between life and death. Only in recent years could we take the ability for granted. Don't. Whether you're forced to spend an emergency night in the backcountry or just want to get the family's campground campfire roaring, the ability to build a one-match fire is an essential outdoor skill. First gather a handful of tinder—dead pine needles work great, as do dry wood shavings. Build a fist-size shelter of toothpick-size twigs over the tinder, topped by a tent of pencil-thick twigs. Light the tinder and blow gently to ignite the thin sticks above. Every few minutes feed the fire with ever-larger sticks, occasionally introducing small then larger split logs. Don't go too thick too fast. Keep tiny broken branches nearby in case the fire begins to peter out. No fair using newspaper, paper napkins, or other manmade ingredients.

Warning: Check local and federal fire regulations for restrictions due to wildfire danger. And be sure to thoroughly extinguish your fire when leaving the site.

When: Anytime.

Where: Unless it's an emergency, build fires in fire rings at designated campsites.

FROM TOP: CHUCK HANEY; SHUTTERSTOCK



39 Learn about the Big Burn

The catastrophic fires that raged across nearly 5,000 square miles of northern Idaho and northwestern Montana in August 1910 transformed the region's landscape and shaped firefighting policy across the United States. Also known as the Big Burn, the Great Fire of 1910 wiped out three towns and killed 87 people. The conflagration, larger than any in the nation's history, so terrified the American public that Congress afterward demanded the fledgling U.S. Forest Service institute complete fire suppression on any blaze. One result has been a century of woody buildup fueling many of the catastrophic wildfires across the West in recent years.

When: Learn about the Great Fire of 1910 anytime.

Where: On PBS, rent the movie *The Big Burn*, based on Timothy Egan's best-selling book of the same name.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "The Great Fire of 1910," November-December 2010.

▸ *Suggested by Bernard Forster, Missoula*

THE GREAT FIRE OF
1910

PHOTO COMPOSITE: LUKE DURAN/MONTANA OUTDOORS
(39) SMOKEY BEAR POSTER: RUDY WENDELIN 1984

Local children of all grades learned to read and write in the Hogan School near Red Lodge from 1895 to 1967.

1895 1967
HOGAN SCHOOL

WAYMARKING.COM

40 Visit an abandoned one-room schoolhouse

Peering in through the window of an abandoned one-room schoolhouse is a reminder of times when rural students walked (or rode horses) to school with their siblings and neighbors and a single teacher taught all grades. The younger children had their own studies, but also learned by listening in on older students' lessons. The older students in turn reinforced what they'd learned by helping the little ones. In these modest sites, the playground consisted of a swing and maybe a netless basketball hoop, and an outhouse served everyone. During the early 1900s there were 2,600 active one-room schoolhouses in the Treasure State. Now just a few dozen hold classes, according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

When: Anytime.

Where: Statewide. Be sure to ask permission beforehand if there's any doubt the structure is not on public property.

▸ *Suggested by Andy Martin, Lewistown*

41 Go snowshoeing

Snowshoeing is the easiest way to explore Montana's outdoors in winter. It doesn't require much gear or coordination, and it's easy: If you can walk, you can snowshoe. A pair of snowshoes plus poles can be purchased for less than $100, available at any major outdoor retailer. Many stores also provide rentals. Beginners will want to stick to any of the 100-plus established snowshoeing trails across Montana. Going off-trail takes some experience, especially where snow is more than a few feet deep.

When: Winter.

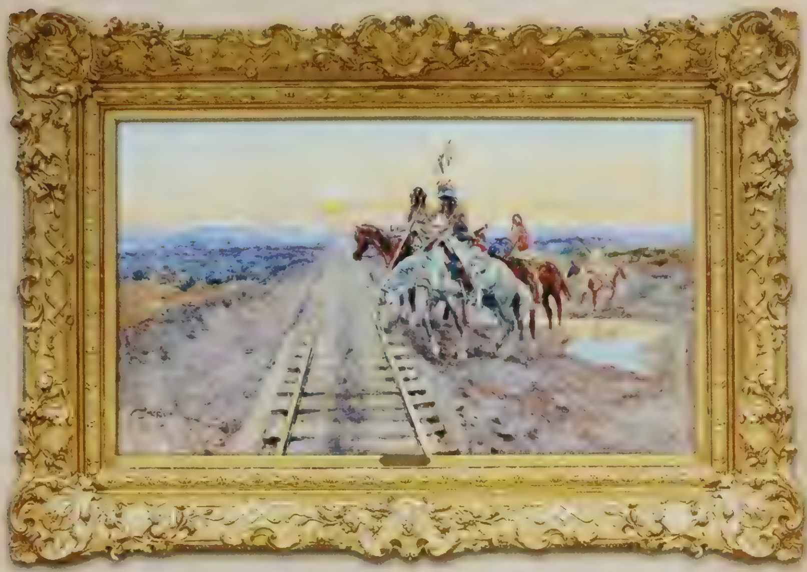
Where: Statewide, though the most comprehensive website we've found focuses mainly on southwestern Montana: visityellowstonecountry.com/snowshoeing.

42 Visit the C.M. Russell Museum

Charles Marion Russell, one of the great American artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focused almost entirely on Montana. For more than a century, the public's vision of the Western outdoors has been shaped by Square Butte, Judith Basin, the Blackfeet Nation's hunting grounds, and other sites featured in Russell's paintings. There's no better place to see Montana's outdoors through the eyes of an artist who loved the land and its people than the C.M. Russell Museum in Great Falls. As a bonus, drive the Great Falls–Fort Benton–Denton–Stanford–Belt–Great Falls loop to see "Russell Country," little changed from when the "Kid" wandered the landscape with paintbrushes and canvas in hand.

When: Year round.

Where: Great Falls.



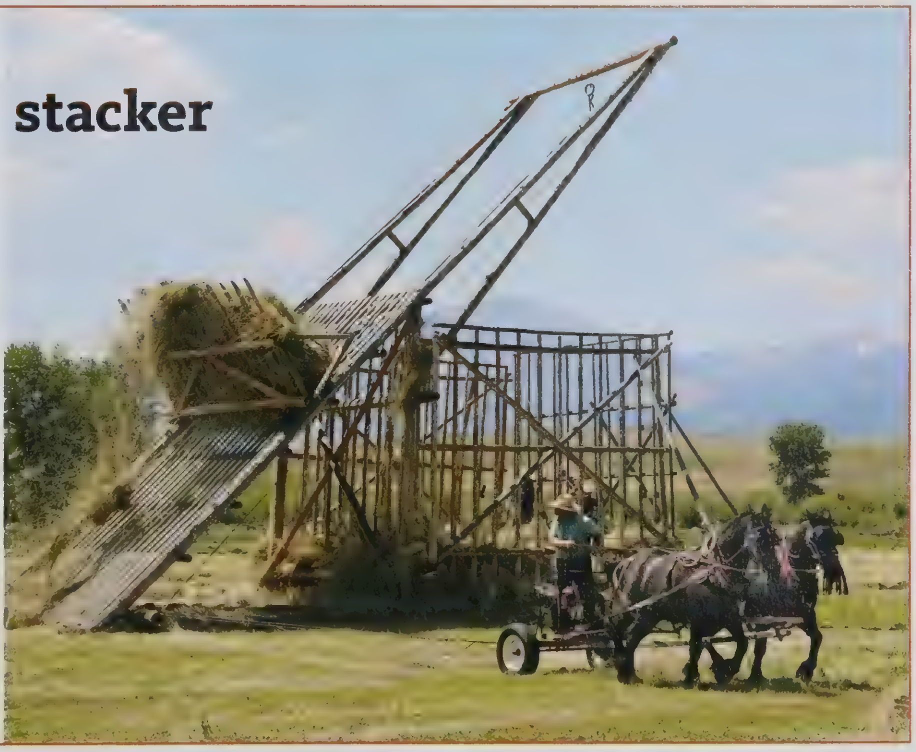
Charles M. Russell's *Trail of the Iron Horse*, 1924.

43 See a beaverslide stacker

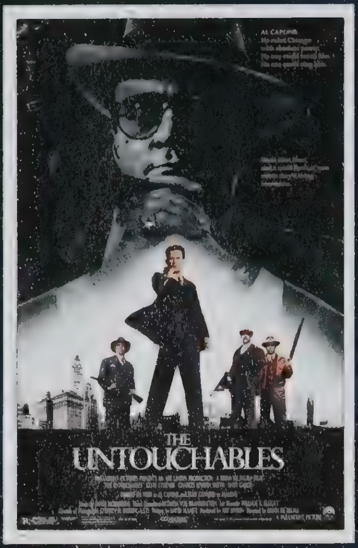
Before the wide use of motorized hay balers, people put up hay (grass or alfalfa that has been cut) by stacking it. The "beaverslide hay stacker," invented in the Big Hole Valley in 1908, is still used there and in a few other parts of Montana. Loose hay is loaded onto a portable 30-foot-tall wooden rack. With pulleys and rope, a tractor or a team of horses draws the rack up and over, dropping the load onto the growing hay stack held in a wooden frame, which is later removed. The wheeled stacker can then be pulled with a tractor or horse team to another site. See a video of a beaverslide stacker in action on the Grant-Kohrs Ranch at youtube.com/watch?v=63yIf8wgKI0.

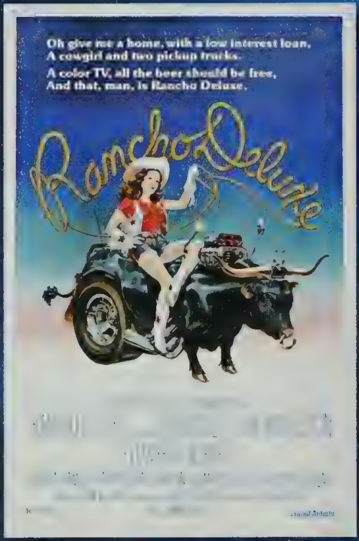
When: July and August to see them in action; year round to see just the structures and hay piles.

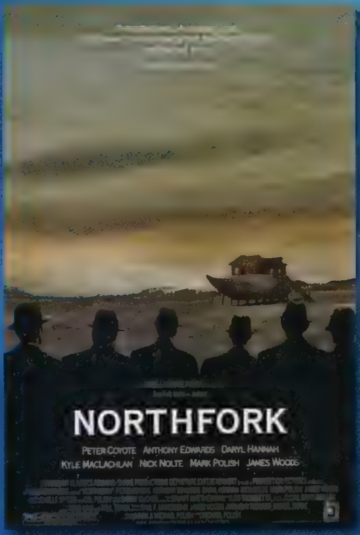
Where: Big Hole and Little Blackfoot valleys.

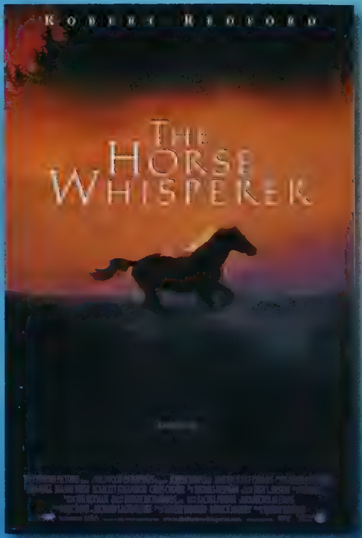


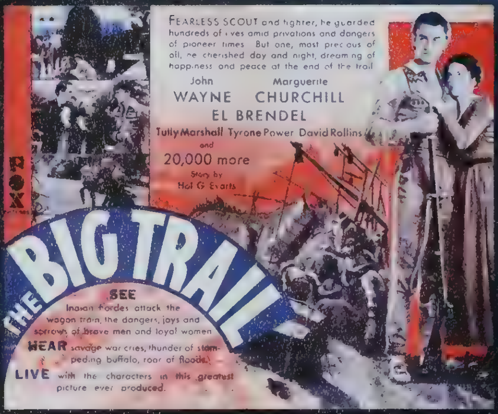
GRANT-KOHRS RANCH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE


THE UNTOUCHABLES


Oh give me a home, with a low interest loan,
A cowgirl and two pickup trucks.
A color TV, all the beer should be free,
And that, man, is Rancho Deluxe.
Rancho Deluxe


NORTHFORK
PETER COYOTE ANTHONY EDWARDS DARYL HANNAH
KYLE MACLACHLAN NICK NOLTE MARK POLISH JAMES WOODS


ROBERT REDFORD
THE HORSE WHISPERER


FEARLESS SCOUT and fighter, he guarded hundreds of lives amid privations and dangers of pioneer times. But one, most precious of all, he cherished day and night, dreaming of happiness and peace at the end of the trail
John WAYNE
Marguerite CHURCHILL
EL BRENDEL
Tully Marshall Tyrone Power David Rollins
and 20,000 more
Story by Hal G. Evarts
FOX
THE BIG TRAIL
SEE Indian hordes attack the wagon train, the dangers, joys and sorrows of brave men and loyal women
HEAR savage war cries, thunder of stampeding buffalo, roar of floods
LIVE with the characters in this greatest picture ever produced

44 See where movies were filmed in Montana's outdoors

Over the past century, more than 100 movies have featured outdoor locations in Montana. Directors seem to love a place that offers snowcapped mountains and arid Great Plains scenery, as well as rushing rivers and empty landscapes that evoke pre-settlement times.

Some of the most famous movies containing all or some scenes shot in the Treasure State's outdoors:

Movie: ***The Big Trail*** (1930)
Sites: Mission Mountains and the National Bison Range in Moiese
Representing: Oregon Trail, late 1800s

Movie: ***Little Big Man*** (1970)
Sites: Nevada City, Crow Reservation
Representing: Late 19th-century Deadwood, South Dakota and the Little Bighorn Battlefield

Movie: ***Rancho Deluxe*** (1975)
Site: In and around Livingston
Representing: Mid-1970s Livingston

Movie: ***The Shining*** (1980)
Site: Going-to-the-Sun Road, Glacier National Park
Representing: Colorado Rockies

A MASTERPIECE OF MODERN HORROR
THE SHINING
A STANLEY KUBRICK FILM
JACK NICHOLSON SHELLEY DUVALL "THE SHINING"
SCATMAN CROTHERS DANNY LLOYD STEPHEN KING
STANLEY KUBRICK & DIANE JOHNSON STANLEY KUBRICK
JAN HARLAN

MERYL STREEP
KEVIN BACON
DAVID STRATHAIRN
THE RIVER WILD

LEONARDO DiCAPRIO TOM
BLOOD LOST. LIFE FOUND.
THE REVENANT
INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS
JANUARY 8

COLUMBIA PICTURES PRESENTS
A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

LITTLE BIG MAN
DUSTIN HOFFMAN "LITTLE BIG MAN"
"EITHER THE MOST NEGLECTED HERO IN HISTORY OR A LIAR OF INSANE PROPORTION!"
MARTIN BALSAM · JEFF COREY · CHIEF DAN GEORGE · FAYE DUNAWAY

Movie: ***The Untouchables*** (1987)
Site: Hardy Bridge over the Missouri River
Representing: Canadian border

Movie: ***A River Runs Through It*** (1992)
Sites: Gallatin, upper Yellowstone, and Boulder rivers as well as several sites in Livingston
Representing: Blackfoot River and 1920s-era Missoula

Movie: ***The River Wild*** (1994)
Sites: Kootenai and Middle Fork Flathead rivers
Representing: Idaho's Salmon River

Movie: ***The Horse Whisperer*** (1998)
Site: In and around Livingston
Representing: Montana

Movie: ***Northfork*** (2003)
Site: Fort Peck Dam, Fort Peck
Representing: Fort Peck, 1955, as Montanans are forced to move to make way for the dam construction

Movie: ***The Revenant*** (2015)
Site: Kootenai Falls
Representing: Dakota Territory, early 1800s

Where: Statewide.

When: Anytime.

Learn more: In *Shot in Montana*, author Brian D'Ambrosio profiles 93 movies filmed in the Treasure State since the silent film *The Devil's Horse* was shot here in 1926.

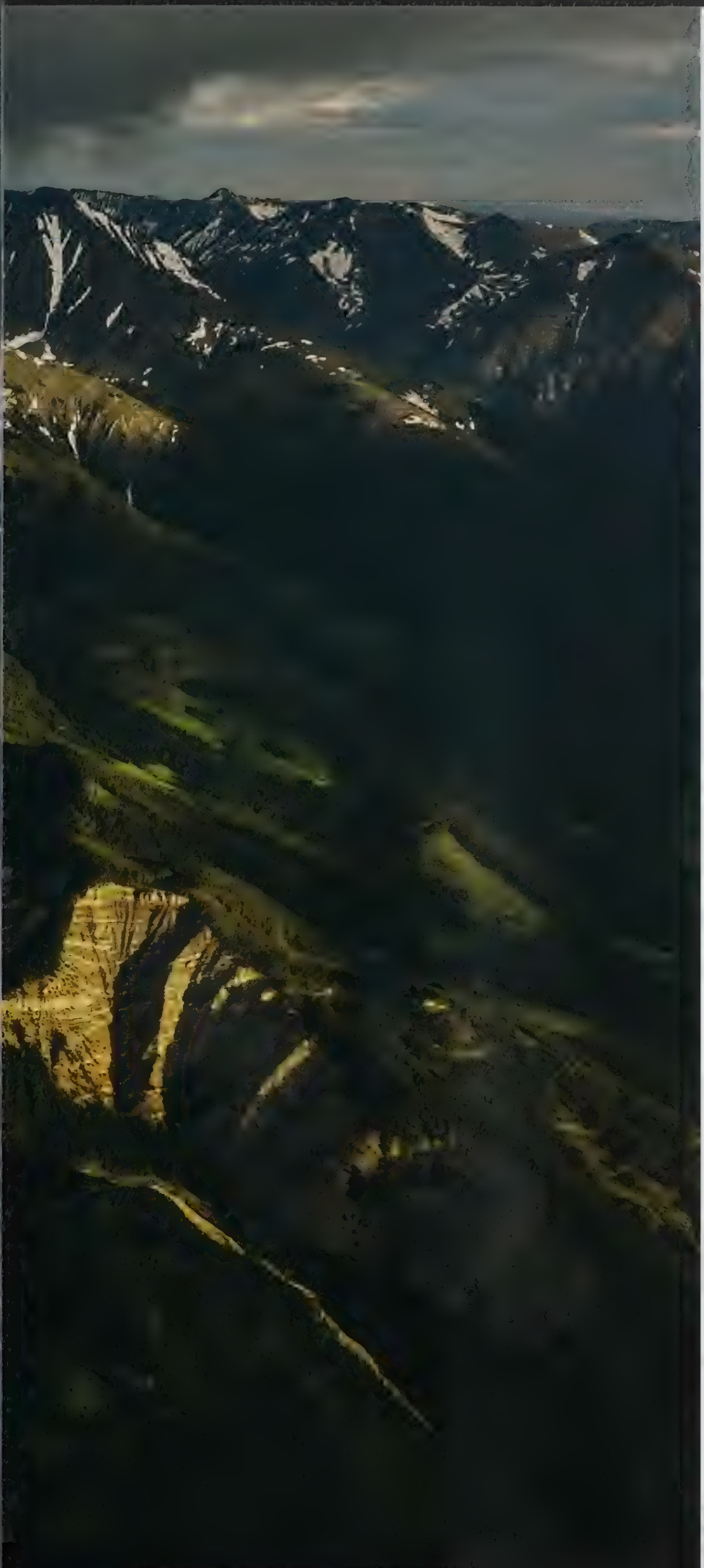
Interesting note: Jane Campion's 2021 film *Power of the Dog*, based on Thomas Savage's 1967 novel of the same name, is set in Montana yet was filmed entirely in New Zealand.

45 Hike the Crazies

The Northern Rockies receive far more attention, but equally scenic are Montana's dozen or so "island" mountain ranges rising up from the surrounding prairie, rangeland, and wheatfields in the central part of the state. Among the best known are the Bears Paw, Snowies, Little Rockies, Pryors, Judiths, and Moccasins.

One great hiking route for experiencing an island range is Middle Fork Sweet Grass Trail (Forest Trail 123) on the eastern side of the southern Crazy Mountains. The Crazies are revered by the Crow people for having metaphysical powers. Known as *Awaxaawapia Pia* ("Ominous Mountains"), they were historically used for vision quests.

As you hike the 5-mile (one-way) route, you'll be surrounded by more than 20 jagged peaks topping 10,000 feet.



When: July through September to avoid snowpack.

Where: North of Big Timber. The trail starts at the junction with Sweet Grass Trail (Forest Trail 122). From here, the hike heads through the Custer Gallatin National Forest southwest to the Middle Fork Sweet Grass Divide above Campfire Lake, one of about 40 alpine lakes in the Crazies. Watch the granite bluffs overhead for mountain goats.

Note: Much of the trail traverses private land, so no camping or hunting is allowed without permission.

[illegible] RIGHT: [illegible]RIK PETERSON [illegible]

46 Seine a stream or lake

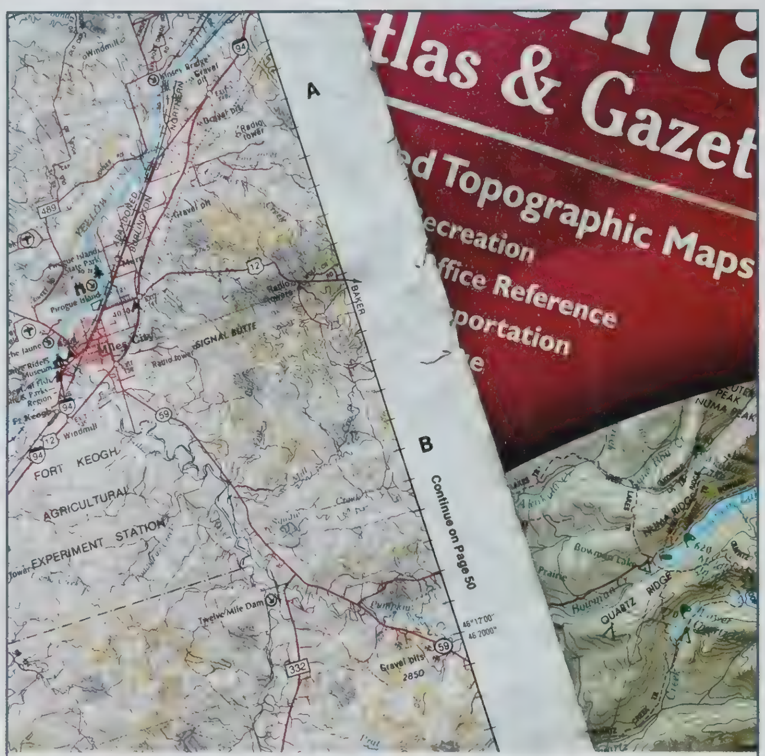
An easy, fun, and inexpensive way to learn what lives underwater is to use a hand or kick seine (pronounce *sane*). Also known as minnow seines, these small-mesh nets capture aquatic insects and small fish that provide a glimpse into Montana's fascinating aquatic worlds. Find instructional videos and purchasing advice online. Bring along a clear glass casserole dish to hold your catch for easier streamside identification. Note that you need a fishing license to seine. Also, to prevent inadvertently transporting invasive species, practice seine-and-release and return all critters back to where you collected them. And always clean and thoroughly dry your seine, wading shoes, and other gear when moving from one waterbody to another.

When: Summer.

Where: Any stream, river, or lake shallows statewide.

TINY FISH
UNDER BIG SKIES

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Tiny Fish Under Big Skies," May-June 2010.



47 Buy a DeLorme *Montana Gazetteer*

In this age of OnX and other GPS-based map apps, using a bound, printed atlas is definitely old school. But many hunters, hikers, anglers, and other outdoor recreationists still regularly pull out their dog-eared "DeLorme" or similar large-format maps while traveling or planning a trip. Maps provide big-picture context and a sense of spatial relationship that a hand-held device just can't offer (not to mention never needing batteries or charging).

When: Anytime.

Where: Statewide.

48

Watch a meteor shower

Meteor showers occur when Earth passes through a stream of particles shed by asteroids or comets. When these tiny "space rocks" hit our atmosphere at high speed, they vaporize, creating what we call shooting stars. The most visible meteor showers are typically the Perseids and Leonids.

When: The Perseids peak August 11–12 each year at more than one meteor per minute. The Leonids meteor shower peaks November 17 each year. The best nights are cloudless with no or little moon.

Where: The darker the sky, the better. Drive at least 30 minutes from any city or town to escape urban light pollution.

▸ *Suggested by Melanie Fillister, Billings*

FROM LEFT: LUKE DURAN; SHUTTERSTOCK

49 See the darkest skies

Spending time outdoors at night under dark skies is one of the most exhilarating ways to enjoy Montana's outdoors. To look up and see the sky ablaze with distant galaxies is to tap into something deep and resonant. Despite the light pollution from growing residential development, Montana still has more areas under dark skies than almost anywhere in the Lower 48. Two of the darkest are Glacier National Park and Medicine Rocks State Park, both designated by the International Dark Sky Association as certified International Dark Sky Sanctuaries.

When: Night.

Where: A map of Montana's darkest skies is at montana.darksky.ngo/dark-sky-destinations/.

50 Hike Glacier's Highline Trail

This 15-mile out-and-back route—one of the most iconic and accessible trails in Glacier National Park—begins at Logan Pass (on Going-to-the-Sun Road across from the visitor center parking lot) and meanders along a fairly flat route for 7.5 miles to Granite Park Chalet. The trail offers stunning views and regular sightings of bighorn sheep and mountain goats. But it's not for those who fear heights. The first part of the trail runs along a steep rock wall that drops hundreds of feet below. Keep on eye on your kids.

When: July through October, depending on snowpack. In early summer, get to the crowded parking lot when it starts to clear at 4 p.m. and eat a picnic dinner at the chalet. It's light then until 11 p.m., so you'll have just enough time to get back to the trailhead before dark if you don't dawdle For a morning hike, you'll need to arrive at first light to snare a parking spot.

Where: Logan Pass, Glacier National Park. Visit nps.gov for updates on Galcier National Park entry requirements.

51 Go snorkeling

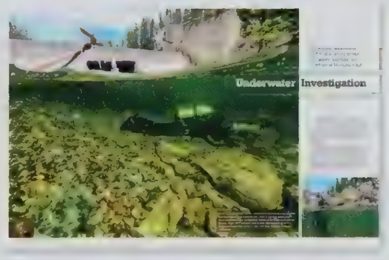
Snorkeling a lake or river feels like flying, as you soar above underwater drop-offs and deep holes. This fun and inexpensive way to explore Montana's watery worlds allows you to see fish ordinarily hidden beneath the surface. All you need is a mask and snorkel, available for less than $35 at any major sporting goods store. Wear sneakers or wading shoes rather than flippers, which make it hard to walk around logs and boulders. Wear a tight-fitting life vest for safety, buoyancy, and warmth—especially helpful in chilly trout streams and lakes. Stay away from murky waters, which provide little visibility, and large rivers, which have powerful, dangerous currents and underwater obstructions like downed trees.

Cruise lake shallows in midday when sunlight illuminates fish and vegetation. If you move slowly, curious fish will often swim up to you. Organize a small-river snorkel outing like a boat trip, with a vehicle on each end of the journey.

When: Mid- to late summer (when the water isn't too cold).

Where: Statewide.

▸ *Suggested by Guy Halvorson, Great Falls*



Underwater Investigation

Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Underwater Investigation," May-June 2022.

FROM TOP SHUTTERSTOCK. ROB ROBERTS

FWP's Montana WILD Education Center in Helena

THOM BRIDGE

52 Visit a regional FWP office and Montana WILD

FWP's seven regional offices are some of the state's best places to learn about Montana's outdoors. The lobbies feature mounted local fish and wildlife, free brochures and pamphlets, and friendly, knowledgeable staff who can tell you everything from the locations of nearby camping spots to where to hunt, fish, kayak, hike, canoe, and watch wildlife.

Montana WILD is FWP's education facility in Helena. It houses wildlife displays, video kiosks, and an aquarium with Arctic grayling, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and other native fish. Often you'll find volunteers carrying "ambassador" raptors from the Montana WILD Wildlife Center next door, which temporarily houses injured birds of prey. Hawks, falcons, eagles, and owls too disabled to be returned to the wild serve as educational animals.

When: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: Kalispell, Missoula, Bozeman, Great Falls, Billings, Glasgow, and Miles City.

Suggested by Fran Gough, West Yellowstone; and Marjorie Nelson, Helena

From Abstraction To Reality
Montana WILD

Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "From Abstraction to Reality," July-August 2017.

53 Go backpacking

Everyone who loves Montana's outdoors should go backpacking at least once. Carrying food and shelter on your back, with only your legs for transportation, is liberating. You go where you want, eat when you want, and stop to rest at your leisure—following laws and regulations, of course. Backpacking gear has come a long way in the past half century, and it's easy to put together a comfortable kit—containing a tent, cooking pot, stove, sleeping bag and pad, clothing, rain gear, bear spray, and a few days of food—weighing only 30 pounds. That's light enough for even a beginner to haul to a scenic backcountry campsite.

When: Year round, but mostly in summer and early fall.

Where: Statewide. Note that Glacier and Yellowstone national parks require backcountry reservations.

SHUTTERSTOCK

54 Watch cowboys move cattle

Yep, just as they did 100 or more years ago, cowboys still herd cattle from one rangeland to another, or round up cows for branding or shipment to market. These days wranglers are just as likely to ride four-wheelers as four-leggers, but it's still possible to see a few on horseback wearing their traditional silk neck bandana. The Real McCoy, as they say.

When: Spring (branding), summer (range to range), fall (gathering for shipment).

Where: Most cattle in Montana are in the state's southern half. The top five cattle-producing counties are Beaverhead, Custer, Fergus, Carter, and Rosebud.

55 Visit Crystal Park

The Crystal Park Picnic and Mineral Collection Area in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest is a little-known spot that's great for families looking for a weekend outdoor activity. Located in southwestern Montana's Pioneer Mountains northwest of Dillon, the remote site allows visitors to hunt for quartz crystals—and even the occasional rare purple amethyst. The crystals formed in the molten granite that pushed up to the earth's surface 70 million years ago. The U.S. Forest Service charges $5 per vehicle, and you'll need to bring your own tools: shovel, hand trowel, gardener's hand cultivator, sifting screen, and gloves, plus a daypack to carry it all. And yes, you can take home the treasures you find. When finished, hit Elkhorn Hot Springs just around the corner for a cleansing soak then lunch or dinner in the lodge.

When: May 15 through October 15. Call the Dillon Ranger District at 406-683-3900 for road conditions.

Where: Northwest of Dillon in the Pioneer Mountains. Search the internet for "Crystal Park Montana."

▸ Suggested by Nicorie Steinpfad, Bozeman

56 Survive a prairie blizzard

It's one thing to experience the joys of eastern or central Montana in late spring, when meadowlarks are singing and the early morning sun warms your smiling face. It's another—though equally representative—to drive white-knuckled on a highway through snow blowing sideways from the force of 50-mph winds. Only then can you fully appreciate what it must have been like to raise a family in the early 1900s in a drafty cabin or, before that, survive in a tepee burning buffalo chips to keep warm.

When: The National Weather Service office in Great Falls says Montana's snowiest month is January, followed by December.

Where: The best place to experience the bleak terror of a prairie blizzard is anywhere between I-15 and the North Dakota border north of I-94.

▸ Suggested by Kevin T. Anderson, Miles City

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

57 See a petrified forest

Petrified wood is a fossil of a tree or other plant. Originally the vegetation was encased in mud, often when flooded by an inland sea. Then, over millions of years, the plant matter decayed and was replaced by silica in water that trickled into and filled the resulting cavity. At the Gallatin Petrified Forest Interpretive Trail (GPFIT) at Tom Miner Basin north of Gardiner, you can see entire groves of fossilized trees. Another site is the Specimen Creek Trail (SCT), 30 miles north of West Yellowstone and within the boundary of Yellowstone National Park. Collecting is not allowed at either site, and bear spray and mosquito repellent are recommended for both areas.

When: July through September.

Where: GPFIT: 16 miles north of Gardiner on U.S. Highway 89 to Tom Miner Road, then 11 miles west to Tom Miner Campground; SCT: U.S. Highway 191 north of West Yellowstone.

More information: mthikes.com/gallatin-petrified-forest-interpretive-trail/.

• *Suggested by Linda Weirather, Vancouver, WA*

Petrified tree in the Gallatin Range

The Elkhorn cemetery includes headstones of several children who died during a diphtheria epidemic that ravaged the town between 1888 and 1890.

58 Visit an old rural cemetery

A century or more ago, life in Montana was much harder than it is today. Ranching, mining, farming, logging, and related jobs were even more dangerous. Without electricity, indoor plumbing, or reliable heating, even regular chores were onerous. Pneumonia, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and other deadly maladies often robbed families of one or more children. To understand just how hard it was, visit a rural cemetery. These sites of quiet beauty and solemnity are usually a few miles outside any small town, visible from afar as the only tree grove for miles around (church parishioners often watered saplings by hand for years until they were well established). Most heartbreaking are the children's gravestones ("Our Darling Emma: b. 1901 d. 1904").

When: Year round.

Where: Many rural cemeteries are visible when driving through central and eastern Montana. Almost all are public and open to respectful visitors.

Bonus: See a slide show of Montana cemetery gates at youtube.com/watch?v=-g2XdQuAJwg.

▸ *Suggested by Kerry Neils, Helena*

FROM TOP: USDA NRCS MONTANA; SHUTTERSTOCK

59 Drive a scenic route

You don't need to leave your vehicle to see Montana's eye-popping scenery. Of the more than 60 scenic routes across the state, here are our top picks:

National Scenic and Backcountry Byways

- Kings Hill Scenic Byway
- Missouri Breaks Backcountry Byway
- St. Regis–Paradise Scenic Byway
- Big Sky Backcountry Byway
- Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway
- Big Sheep Creek Backcountry Byway
- Lake Koocanusa Scenic Byway
- Beartooth Highway
- Garnet Backcountry Byway

Other beautiful drives

- Anaconda-Pintler Scenic Route
- Rocky Mountain Front Scenic Route: Wolf Creek to Choteau via U.S. Highway 287, then to Browning and St. Mary via U.S. Highway 89, to take in the entire Rocky Mountain Front
- Seeley-Swan Highway in fall: Clearwater Junction to Swan Lake

When: Year round, though spring and early fall are most scenic and less crowded.

Where: Statewide.

More information:

- bigskyfishing.com/scenic-drives.
- scenicbyways.info/state/MT.html.

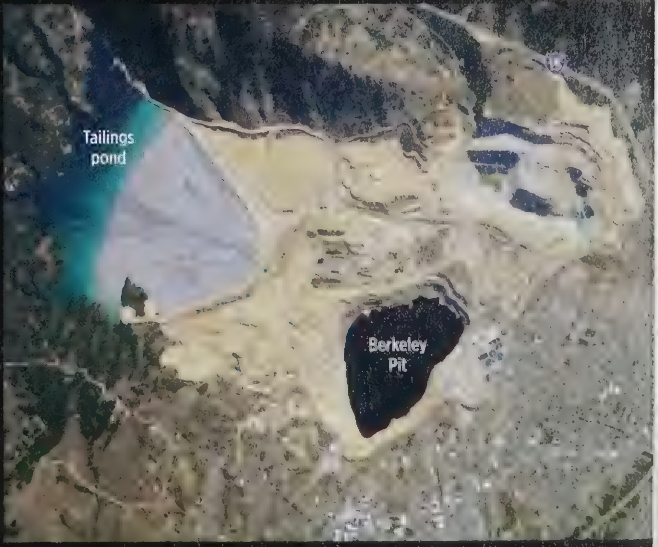
Suggested by Rick Clark, Lincoln

60 Visit the Berkeley Pit

During the first half of the 20th century, copper mining made Butte one of the West's most cosmopolitan and prosperous small cities. It also created some of the most polluted water in North America. A grim remnant of mining's toxic aftermath is the Berkeley Pit, infamous as the nation's largest Superfund complex (which extends downstream along the Clark Fork River nearly to Missoula). The 1-mile-wide and ⅓-mile-deep Berkeley Pit is filled with water laced with heavy metals and dangerous chemicals that leach from the rock, including copper, arsenic, cadmium, zinc, and sulfuric acid. A flock of more than 350 snow geese perished there in 1995. In the quarter-century since, drones, air cannons, and sirens have prevented birds from landing in the water and dying. The water has reached its maximum level and is now being treated to remove copper and other toxins before being pumped downstream into Silver Bow Creek. The treated water may actually help native westslope cutthroat trout by maintaining adequate stream flows in late summer.

When: The pit is open year round to tourists.

Where: Butte.



61 Paddle the Flathead Marine Trail

At 120,000 acres, Flathead Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake in the West. An increasingly popular way to see the scenic lake and its dozen islands is by human-powered craft. The Flathead Marine Trail, created by FWP, is a network of access points and day-use stopover areas for kayakers and canoeists. The "trail" is conceptual, in that there's no designated route. Beginners can stick to the safety of shallow bays while experts can embark on cross-lake voyages. Rental craft are available at marinas around the lake.

When: Summer weekdays are best because there are fewer motorboats.

Where: A map showing access points and distances between features, along with other important information is at bigfork.org/flathead-lake-marine-trail-map/.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Wet and Wild," July-August 2019.

62 Visit Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Montana is home to 21 national wildlife refuges, from Lee Metcalf in the Bitterroot Valley to Medicine Lake between Fort Peck Indian Reservation and the North Dakota border. All offer spectacular scenery and—no surprise—great wildlife watching, especially for waterfowl and other birds.

One especially stands out. Red Rock Lakes, designated a National Natural Landmark, sits high in the Centennial Valley in southwestern Montana at 6,600 feet and in some places climbs to more than 10,000 feet. The 50,000-acre refuge contains a diverse mix of prairie, sagebrush-steppe, lakes, rivers, woodlands, and even alpine areas. Perhaps nowhere else in the entire world can a person have the opportunity to spot a pronghorn, sage-grouse, trumpeter swan, and moose all in the same day.

When: The refuge is most accessible June through October.

Where: 30 miles east of where I-15 crosses from Montana into Idaho at Monida Pass.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Where Wildlife Reigns Supreme," March-April 2011.

FROM TOP: RON HOFF; STEVEN AKRE

63

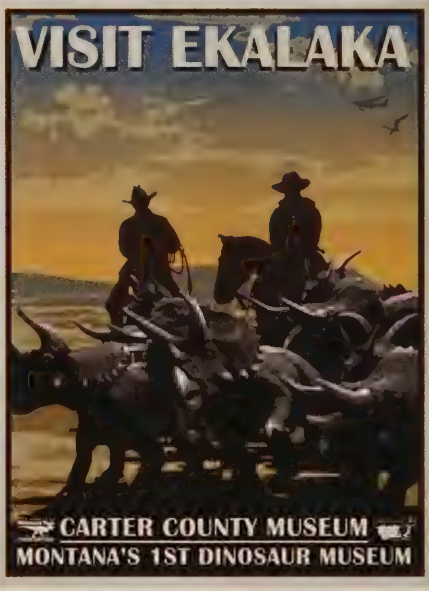
Follow the Montana Dino Trail

If you dig dinosaurs—Montana's earliest big game wildlife—this multiday road trip is for you. The route includes 14 paleontology sites and visitor centers across central and eastern Montana, including the remarkable Carter County Museum in remote Ekalaka. Be sure to check out the amazing (and hilarious) WPA-type posters created for each site by artist Jennifer Hall of the Carter County Museum (like the ones shown here for the Blaine County Museum and Ekalaka).

When: Year round at many locations, but some are closed in winter.

Where: mtdinotrail.org/.

▸ *Suggested by Lori and Phillip Warner, Raleigh, NC*



MONTANA
US
2
THE MONTANA DINOSAUR TRAIL
A PROUD PARTICIPANT
CARTER COUNTY MUSEUM
MONTANA

Hiking the trestle on the Milwaukee Road Rail Trail in the Thompson Park area of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

64 Hike or cycle the Milwaukee Road Rail Trail

One of the West's most scenic rails-to-trails conversions is this 4.5-mile (one way) gravel route in Thompson Park on Butte's southern outskirts. The area is part of the 3-million-acre Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, which manages the park and the trail with the City of Butte and Silver Bow County—the only such partnership in the country. The gentle-grade trail includes two tunnels and a towering trestle bridge and is open to hikers, horseback riders, and cyclists.

Other great rails-to-trails routes include the Headwaters Trail System between Three Forks and Missouri Headwaters State Park, Bozeman-to-Bridger Trail, Old Yellowstone Trail starting at Garrison, Riverfront Trail in Missoula, Bitterroot Trail, Great Northern Historical Trail in northwestern Montana, Hiawatha Trail on the Idaho border, and River's Edge Trail in Great Falls.

When: May 1 to October 31.

Where: From Butte, take Montana Highway 2 south for 9 miles to Thompson Park.

Learn more: co.silverbow.mt.us/453/Thompson-Park.

65 Listen to frogs and toads

Amphibians are sensitive inhabitants of aquatic ecosystems. The disappearance of frogs and toads can be an alarm bell signaling growing pollution or other environmental problems. Frogs and toads are tough to spot, but they make themselves known by distinctive calls late in the day. See their ranges and listen to calls at fieldguide.mt.gov. A few common species to keep an ear out for:

West of the Divide:

- **Pacific treefrog:** A two-part mating call that sounds like a cartoon frog's *rib-bit*.
- **Western toad:** A birdlike chirping.

East of the Divide:

- **Great Plains toad:** An almost deafening jackhammer-like metallic trill lasting up to one minute at a time.
- **Boreal chorus frog:** Like someone running a finger over the teeth of a comb: *reeeek*.
- **Northern leopard frog:** Like someone rubbing a finger across a wet balloon.

Northern leopard frog

When: Summer.

Where: East and west of the Divide, depending on the species.

FROM TOP: PRESTON KERES/USDA; ELIZABETH MOORE

66

Explore an ice cave

Ice caves are caverns in limestone rock that stay cold enough to contain ice all year long. Water seeping into the caves freezes in columns or spreads across the floor to make an ice-rink-like surface. The most accessible caves are on the Ice Caves Loop in the Big Snowy Mountains Wilderness, and Big Ice Cave and Crater Ice Cave in the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

When: July through September.

Where: The Ice Caves Loop is in the Big Snowy Mountains, 10 miles south of Lewistown; Big Ice and Crater Ice caves are in the Pryor Mountains about 50 miles east of Red Lodge in the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT ZACK CLOTHIER SHUTTERSTOCK ASPERDO

67 Paddle the Clearwater River Canoe Trail

This one- to two-hour (3.5-mile) float on a slow, meandering stretch of the Clearwater River near Seeley Lake flows through a dense willow marsh where paddlers might see warblers, bitterns, loons, catbirds, snipe, great blue herons, belted kingfishers, and other birds. This great trip for families and beginning paddlers also offers sightings of painted turtles, muskrats, beavers, and dragonflies. A trail along the river and wetland allows paddlers to hike back to their vehicle and provides viewing access for non-floaters. Brochures about the canoe trail are available at the U.S. Forest Service ranger station in Seeley Lake.

When: Spring, summer, and fall.

Where: 3.7 miles north of Seeley Lake on Montana Highway 83, then 0.7 mile on FR 17597.

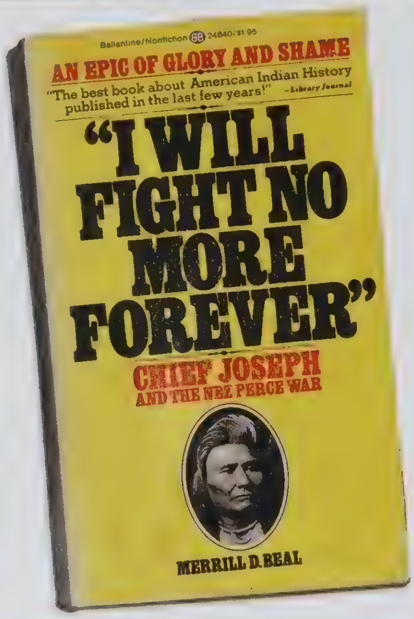
68 Visit the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site

Cattle have been a major part of Montana's landscape for 150 years. One of the best places to learn about the industry in the late 1800s is at this historic site managed by the National Park Service. The ranch contains 88 historic buildings preserved on a 1,600-acre working cattle operation where visitors can experience how the open-range era helped shape Montana and the rest of the West.

When: Year round.

Where: Deer Lodge.

▸ *Suggested by Arthur Brooks, Tacoma, WA*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CHIEF JOSEPH AND THE NEZ PERCE WAR

MERRILL D. BEAL

69

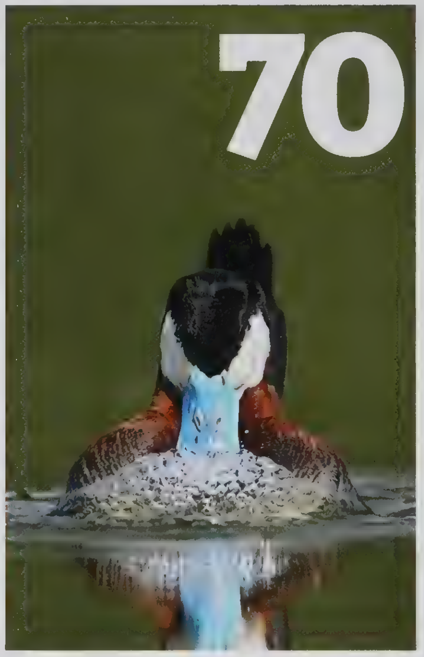
Follow the Nez Perce (*Niimíipuu*) National Historic Trail

The 1877 flight of the non-treaty Nez Perce bands from their homelands while pursued by the U.S. Army is one of the most inspiring yet sorrowful events in Western U.S. history. Chiefs Joseph, Looking Glass, White Bird, Ollokot, Lean Elk, and others led nearly 750 Nez Perce men, women, and children and more than twice that many horses for 1,170 miles through the mountains from mid-June to October of 1877. The trail starts in Oregon, cuts across north-central Idaho, and enters Montana near Lolo Pass, finally ending at the Bears Paw Mountains, 40 miles from the Canadian border, the Indians' destination.

Two must-see sites along the trail: the Big Hole National Battlefield, 10 miles west of Wisdom, and the Bear Paw Battlefield, 16 miles south of Chinook. (Note that the official names of the mountains and the battlefield differ slightly.) It was here, after the Nez Perce surrendered to the U.S. Army on October 5, 1877, that Chief Joseph spoke his famous words, "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

When: Year round.

Where: An online map is at fs.usda.gov/main/npnht/maps-pubs. For more historical information, visit fs.usda.gov/npnht.



70

Witness the "bubble display" of a courting male ruddy duck

Many wildlife species—including sandhill cranes, western grebes, sharp-tailed grouse, and sage-grouse—exhibit lively displays during mating season. But the most weirdly wonderful may be that of the male ruddy duck. This stocky little blue-billed bird begins his unique courtship routine, called "bubbling," by puffing his breast feathers, then beating them progressively faster with the underside of his bill. Air from the feathers creates bubbles in the water directly in front of his breast. If you're close enough, you can actually hear the bubbling, especially if several males are active.

When: The courtship display takes place in June and early July.

Where: Look for these stocky ducks with their blue bills, rust-colored feathers, and stiff upturned tail in wetlands statewide.

▸ *Suggested by Jim Hansen, FWP central flyway coordinator, Billings*

71

Hit Montana's chickadee and warbler hotspots

Montana is home to four chickadee species: black-capped, boreal, chestnut-backed, and mountain. A great spot to see all four in one day is the Pete Creek Campground in the Kootenai National Forest, where you also might spot three-toed and black-backed woodpeckers, spruce grouse, varied thrushes, and veeries.

For warblers, there's no better place than Westby's Noelle Meyer Memorial Park, on the opposite end of Montana, at the North Dakota border just 10 miles or so south of the Saskatchewan border. One local birder has spotted 29 different warbler species here over the years, including the Canada, chestnut-sided, Connecticut, Cape May, Blackburnian, magnolia, and palm.

When: For chickadees, visit Pete Creek in mid- to late June. For warblers, hit the Westby town park in late May to early June or mid-August through mid-September.

Where: Pete Creek Campground is about 36 miles north of Troy off Highway 508. Westby is Montana's northeasternmost town, about 26 miles northeast of Plentywood.

▸ *Suggested by Byron Campbell, Glendive*

Common yellowthroat warblers

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

72 See and hear bighorn rams in combat

One of the great wildlife spectacles of the Northern Rockies is the violent clash of bighorn rams bashing heads during mating season. The two most accessible spots in Montana to see this are on the Bighorn Trail at the end of Montana Highway 37 outside of Libby and at the Koo-Koo-Sint Sheep Viewing Site, 8 miles east of Thompson Falls on Montana Highway 200.

Named for Canadian explorer David Thompson, the Koo-Koo-Sint ("Man Who Looks at Stars" in the local Flathead language) site also offers an excellent opportunity to see and photograph bighorn sheep grazing in a meadow—whether butting heads or not.

When: End of October through May, though peak viewing is November through December.

Where: Near Libby and Thompson Falls.

▸ *Suggested by Tony A. Fantozzi, Libby*

……

73 Visit Montana's Lake Como

Usually it takes a long uphill hike to reach a scenic mountain lake. But at Lake Como, near Darby, you can practically drive to the water's edge. Located in the Bitterroot Valley at 4,400 feet, the 900-acre lake is framed by the Bitterroot Mountains to the west and provides opportunities for swimming, boating, paddling, and fishing for rainbow trout and mountain whitefish. The mostly flat 8-mile Lake Como Loop Trail is ideal for hiking and mountain biking, and includes a scenic horse pack bridge that crosses Rock Creek and a small waterfall. The lake also has picnic areas, a swimming area and sand beach, and campgrounds.

When: Open for hiking year round, though the trail can be covered in snow from December through May. The lake is best for swimming in August. Note that weekends are crowded and the parking lot usually fills by noon on Saturdays and Sundays.

Where: From U.S. Highway 93, about 8 miles south of Hamilton, head west on Lake Como Road. The site is managed by the Bitterroot National Forest, which charges a $5 day-use fee from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

FROM TOP: CHRIS McGOWAN; TIFFANY WILLIAMS

74

See trumpeter swans

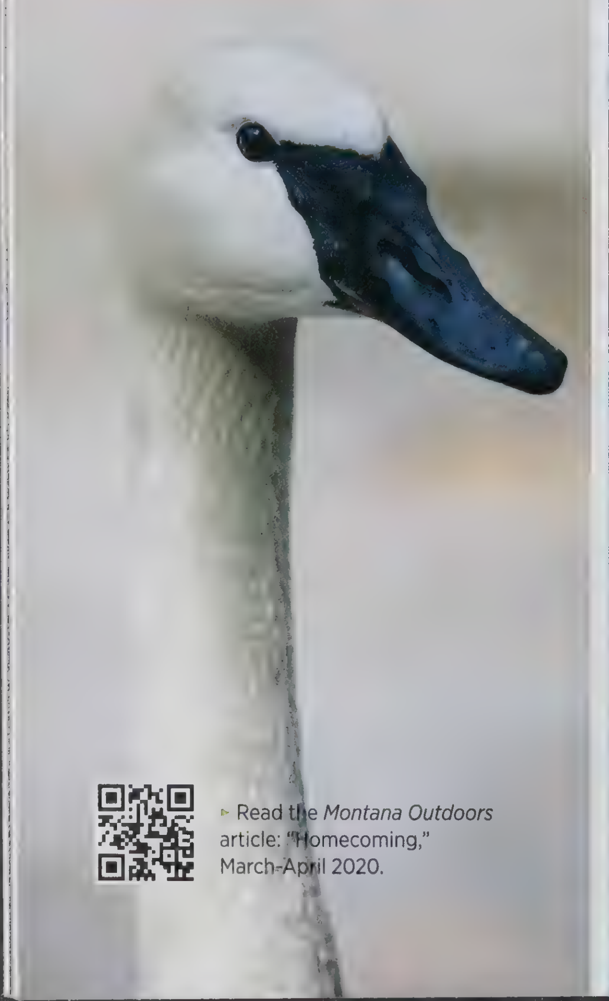
Weighing up to 32 pounds and with a 7-foot wingspan, these majestic birds are North America's largest waterfowl. Once common across much of today's Montana, trumpeters were almost wiped out by market hunters by the end of the 1800s. Over the past few decades, FWP, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have slowly brought them back from the edge of extinction. Today more than 200 live in the Flathead Valley's abundant wetlands. Trumpeters also show up in marshes of the Blackfoot and Madison valleys and Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

A trumpeter can be distinguished from the more common and similar-size tundra swan by its straight bill (the tundra's is slightly concave), the lack of yellow toward the back of the beak, and a call consisting of one to three honks (rather than the tundra's distinctive whistling and hooting).

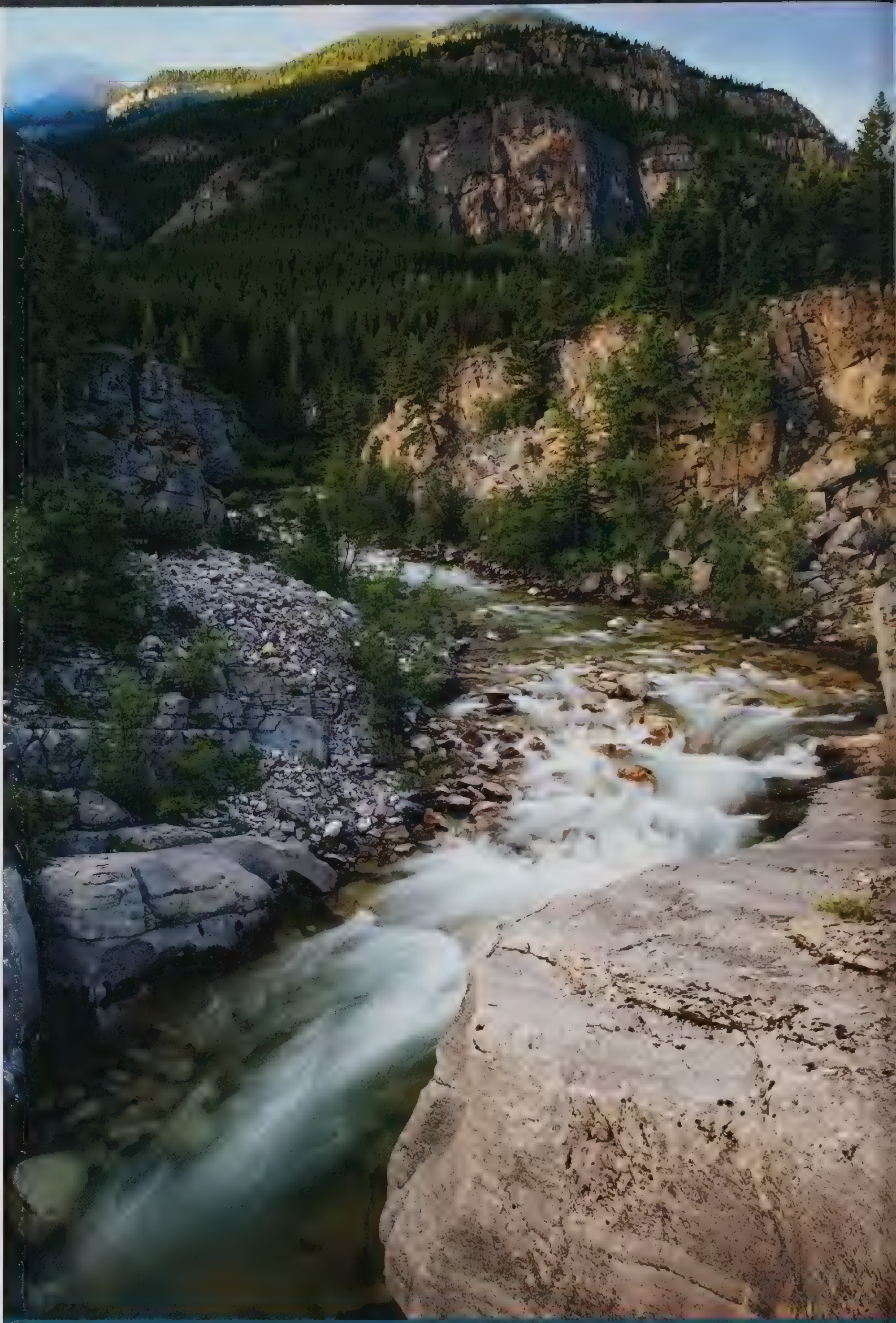
When: The best times to spot the large swans are in spring, summer, and fall.

Where: Throughout the Flathead Valley, at Red Rock Lakes NWR, and in wetlands and lakes in the Blackfoot and Madison valleys.

▸ *Suggested by Bonnie Alton, Portland, OR*



▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Homecoming," March-April 2020.



75

Hike to Devil's Glen on the Dearborn River

A hidden gem rarely listed in guidebooks, Devil's Glen is a series of deep chasms on the upper Dearborn River in the Scapegoat Wilderness that can be reached by a moderate 7-mile round-trip hike. The first mile runs past a dozen or so homes and cabins, but once you hit the bridge and cross the river there's no trace of development. It's another 2 miles after the bridge before you get close to the river's aquamarine runs and pools. On hot days, bring water for yourself and your dog.

When: Spring, summer, and fall.

Where: The trailhead is southwest of Augusta. For directions, visit wildmontana.org and search for Trail #206.

▸ *Suggested by Kerry Neils, Helena*

FROM LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK; CHRIS MCGOWAN

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE
$25
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING AND CONSERVATION STAMP

76 Buy guns, ammo, fishing gear, or duck stamps

Want to contribute to conserving Montana's outdoors? Buy hunting and fishing gear and stamps. Hunters and other shooters, anglers, and boaters all tax themselves with each purchase. Proceeds from the firearms and ammunition tax, established by the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Act, are returned to states based on their population and land base for wildlife habitat and management. The 1950 Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act funnels excise tax revenue to state projects ranging from fishing access sites to hatcheries to fish population monitoring. The Federal Duck Stamp, required for waterfowl hunting since it was established in 1934, raises money to protect wetlands vital for migratory waterfowl. Montana's state duck stamp revenue pays for waterfowl management.

When: Buy hunting and fishing gear anytime. Each year the new Federal Duck Stamp, which can also be purchased by birders and others who want to contribute to conserving wetland wildlife, goes on sale in late June.

Where: Outdoor retailers statewide. Buy federal and state duck stamps at FWP regional offices.

▸ *Suggested by Richard Markham, St. Cloud, MN*

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "My Favorite Tax," March-April 2017.

MY FAVORITE TAX

77

Attend a rodeo

Cattle herding has been part of Montana's outdoor life since before statehood, and rodeos put cow wranglers' equestrian skills to the test. Competitive events at the high school, collegiate, and professional levels include barrel racing, bull riding, saddle bronc riding, bareback riding, tie-down roping, team roping, and steer wrestling. Many small-town rodeos are also celebrations of summer, where locals and tourists mingle at parades, car shows, carnivals, kids events, and vendor fairs. Some of the better known are the Annual NRA Gardiner Rodeo, Augusta's American Legion Rodeo and Parade, the Livingston Roundup, and Montana's oldest rodeo, the Wolf Point Wild Horse Stampede.

When: Summer.

Where: Statewide. For a list of the larger family-friendly rodeos in Big Sky Country, visit destination-montana.com/rodeos-montana/ and montanaprorodeo.com.

▸ *Suggested by Marion Sheppard, Billings*

BS
BRIDGERSTE
Bronc riding at the Wilsall Rodeo

Montana Outdoors
Montana Outdoors
The 50th
Anniversary Issue
Montana Outdoors
What's in your venison?
Montana Outdoors
Bull Trout

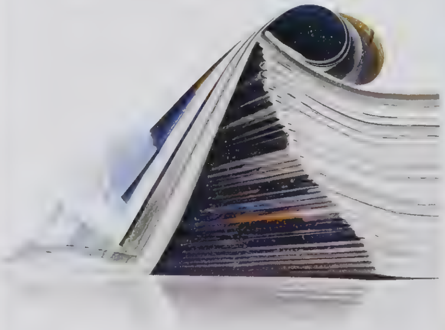
78

Resubscribe to *Montana Outdoors*

We know, we know: It's a blatant self-serving pitch. But we honestly believe that this magazine is one of the best sources of information on Montana's outdoor life and FWP's work to keep fish and wildlife populations healthy and abundant and maintain trails and state parks.

When: Anytime.

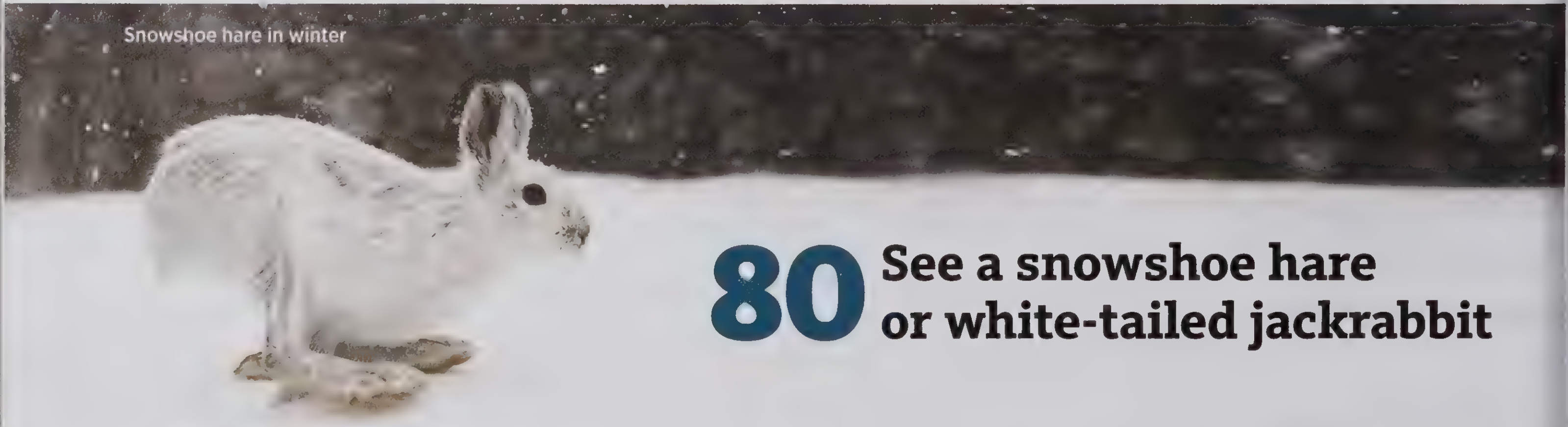
Where: Resubscribe or give a gift subscription by calling 800-678-6668 or visiting fwp.mt.gov/montana-outdoors. Or stop in our office at 930 Custer Avenue in Helena. We'd love to meet you.



79 Take one of Montana's three remaining ferries

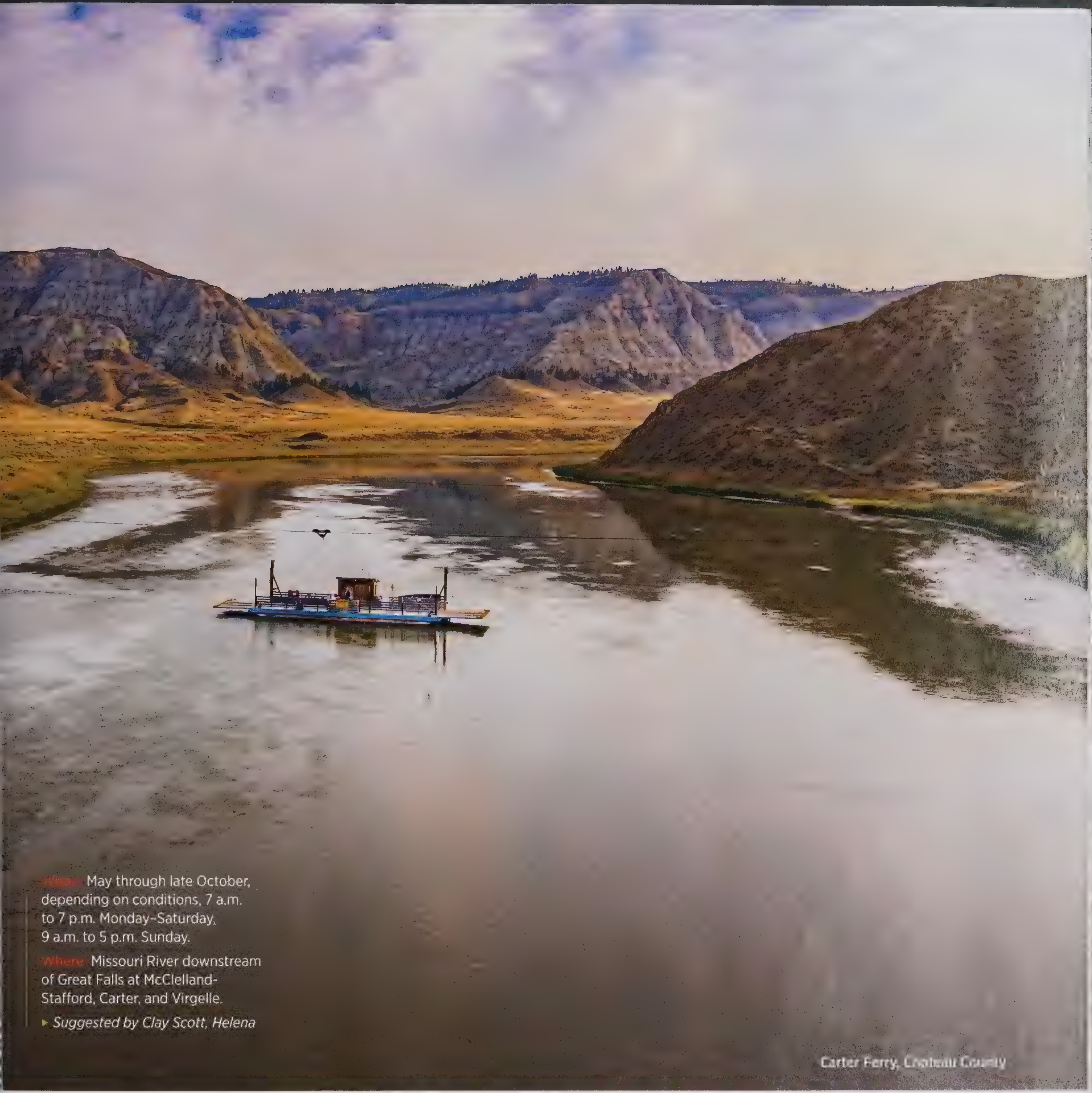
Bridges are so pervasive throughout Montana that it's easy to take crossing a river for granted. But before bridges, the only way for people to reach the other side was to take a ferry. And before ferries, the options were to wade, swim, or ride a horse.

Of the dozens of ferries that once carried livestock and vehicles across Montana rivers, only three—McClelland-Stafford, Carter, and Virgelle—remain, all on the Missouri River between Great Falls and the C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. Powered by diesel motors, the ferries track along a wrist-thick bank-to-bank steel cable. On both ends, boxes contain a lever, button, or walkie-talkie to summon the operator. The free-of-charge ferries (funded by local counties) each make 1,000 to 2,000 crossings per year, carrying tourists and local ranchers and farmers.



Snowshoe hare in winter

80 See a snowshoe hare or white-tailed jackrabbit



When: May through late October, depending on conditions, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday–Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Missouri River downstream of Great Falls at McClelland-Stafford, Carter, and Virgelle.

▸ *Suggested by Clay Scott, Helena*

Carter Ferry, Chouteau County

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SEAN R. HEAVEY; SHUTTERSTOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK

Snowshoe hares are large members of the rabbit family found throughout the coniferous forests of western Montana and at higher elevations in many central Montana mountains. White-tailed jackrabbits, though also in the rabbit family, are technically hares, not rabbits. They are found in shrublands and grasslands across Montana except in the far northwestern part of the state.

Hares differ from Montana's four rabbit species in several ways: They are larger, their coats change from brown to white in winter, they nest aboveground (rabbits nest in underground burrows), and they are born with fur and sight, while rabbits are born hairless and blind.

When and where: Spot snowshoe hares, or at least the distinctive tracks made by their oversized back feet, by walking quietly through conifer forests in winter. Upland bird, mule deer, and pronghorn hunters often spot white-tailed jackrabbits in fall.

▸ *Suggested by Margaret Armstrong, Havre*

White-tailed jackrabbit in summer

81 Take a bat hike or bat cruise

Most people have seen a bat or two flying over their backyard or a stream or lake at dusk, nabbing mosquitoes and other flying insects. But few have ever seen—or heard—anything like the swarms of big brown, little brown, and other bat species that emerge from limestone cliffs along Holter Reservoir each summer night to feast on the swarms of mayflies and caddis flies. Limited-run tours by Gates of the Mountains Marina are led by bat experts from nearby Helena who carry devices that transmit the bats' sound waves into rapid beeps, which grow almost deafening during peak flights. FWP holds evening bat hikes at Lewis & Clark Caverns, Lone Pine, and Spring Meadow Lake state parks.

When: Late summer. Call or visit the parks for dates and times. Book a seat on the boat tour at gatesofthemountains.com.

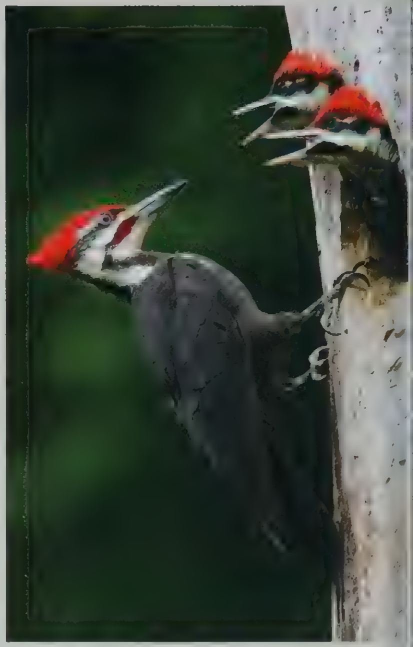
Where: Gates of the Mountains Marina and Lewis & Clark Caverns, Lone Pine, and Spring Meadow Lake state parks.

- *Suggested by Matt Bell, Helena*

On a Bat Safari

- Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "On a Bat Safari," July-August 2020.

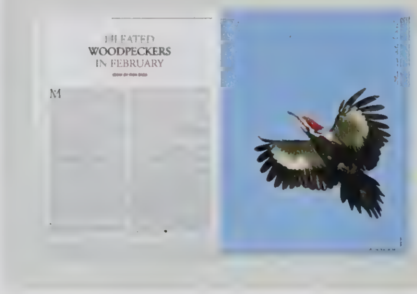
82 Find a pileated woodpecker



Considered by some as the model for the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker, the pileated is a massive forest bird that some birders jokingly call a pterodactyl. The largest woodpecker north of Mexico, this crested, anvil-beaked bird lives in Montana from the Big Belt Mountains near Helena west to the Idaho border.

When: Many birders find pileateds in late winter by following the sound of them hammering at dead trees to find ants and beetles. The bird's large size and bright red head, with an exaggerated crest, make it easy to spot and identify.

Where: Look for these big birds in old-growth and mature stands of western larch, Douglas fir, and ponderosa pine. They seem to especially like old, decayed larch for excavating nesting hollows.



PILEATED WOODPECKERS IN FEBRUARY

- *Suggested by Alex McGuigan, Sioux Falls, SD*
- Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Pileated Woodpeckers in February," March-April 2009.

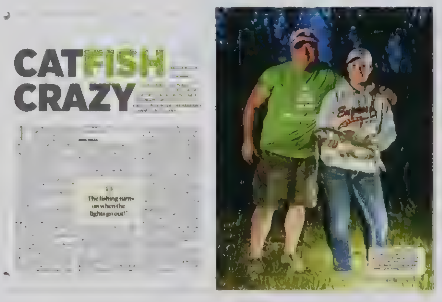
83 Attend the Milk River Catfish Classic

Northeastern Montana's biggest summer blowout is the Milk River Catfish Classic, held in Glasgow each year in early June. Part fishing tournament, part carnival, part rock concert, the "Classic" is a celebration of the Milk River, and especially its native channel catfish. The event includes a pancake breakfast, food trucks, street dancing, a cornhole tournament, and a 5k fun run. Festivities begin on Friday evening and culminate with the official fish weigh-in at midnight Saturday, followed by the always-raucous awards ceremony.

When: The Milk River Catfish Classic is held on the first Saturday in June each year.

Where: Downtown Glasgow.

- *Suggested by Andrew McKean, Glasgow*
- Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Catfish Crazy," May-June 2020.



CATFISH CRAZY

FROM TOP: DONALD M. JONES; JOHN WARNER

84 Watch the Race to the Sky Dogsled Race

Alaska dogsledding gets all the attention, but Montana, home of one of the sport's racing superstars, was the epicenter of dogsledding during World War II. That's when the U.S. Army established the Camp Rimini War Dog Training Center in what is today the Helena National Forest to train sled dogs for the war effort in northern Europe. Montana's oldest and longest dogsled race is the 300-mile, five-day Race to the Sky, second in length only to the 940-mile Iditarod. The Race to the Sky pays homage to the state's dog-mushing heritage by starting each year at Camp Rimini. Lincoln resident Doug Swingley is a one-time winner of that event and a four-time champion of the famous Alaska race, one of only three people to have won the Iditarod that many times.

When: The Race to the Sky begins the second Friday in February and runs five days.

Where: The race begins in Camp Rimini, about 15 miles west of Helena, runs through the Blackfoot and Clearwater basins, and ends near Butte.

▸ *Suggested by Mark Cameron, Great Falls*

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Go, Dog, Go!" November-December 2001.

Go, Dog, Go!

85 See Hungry Horse and Libby dams

Hungry Horse Dam

Montana is home to dozens of dams, but these two hydropower structures in the state's northwestern region are particularly significant. Finished in 1953, Hungry Horse Dam backs up the South Fork of the Flathead River into Hungry Horse Reservoir. The dam blocks fish movement yet inadvertently protects pure-strain native westslope cutthroat in the watershed from hybridization with non-native rainbow trout downstream. Libby Dam, completed in 1972, created Lake Koocanusa, which extends north well into British Columbia. Libby Dam blocks the spawning runs of land-locked white sturgeon, a federally endangered species that has almost disappeared from Montana.

Construction of both dams and reservoirs wiped out fish and wildlife populations and habitat on tens of thousands of acres. The harmful effects are mitigated with payments from the federal Bonneville Power Administration, which funds habitat projects and roughly two dozen FWP fisheries and three FWP wildlife positions.

When: Year round.

Where: Libby Dam is 17 miles east of Libby on Montana Highway 37. Hungry Horse Dam is 10 miles southeast of Columbia Falls off Montana Highway 40.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "The Fish and the Turbines," July-August 2020.

THE FISH THE TURBINES

FROM TOP: CHUCK HANEY
JEREMIE HOLLMAN

86 Visit Pictograph Cave State Park

The three caves at this National Historic Landmark have been attracting visitors for more than 9,000 years. In 1937, Works Progress Administration (WPA) crews documenting Pictograph Cave found 106 rock art images. Archaeologists determined that the white, black, and red images were made at various times from 200 to 2,145 years ago. Carbon dating has also indicated other human activity there going back thousands of years. Located just outside the Crow Indian Reservation, the site holds spiritual significance for the Apsáalooke people. Roughly 85 percent of the rock images have disappeared from vandalism, natural fading, and water damage, but visitors can view replicas at the park's visitor center and museum. The park also offers a hiking trail, birding opportunities, and picnic grounds.

When: Pictograph Cave State Park is open year round but has limited open days in winter. Visit fwp.mt.gov/stateparks for details.

Where: From Billings, head northeast on I-90 for a few miles to exit 452, then drive 6 miles south on Coburn Road.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Where There Is Rock Writing," May-June 2010.

87 Float the lower Yellowstone

The *upper* Yellowstone River from Yellowstone National Park downstream to Billings has been famous for more than a century, mainly for its mountain scenery and world-class trout fishing. The *lower* Yellowstone, from Billings to the North Dakota border? Not so much. But that's changing. Kayakers, canoeists, rock hounds, and anglers are discovering the lower river's beauty, solitude, moss agates, and incredible catch rates for sauger, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, and other warmwater species. The 344-mile stretch provides 21 access points, about half with boat ramps. FWP fishing access sites also provide places for hiking, dog walking, nature study, and bird watching.

▸ *Suggested by Angie Grove, Helena*

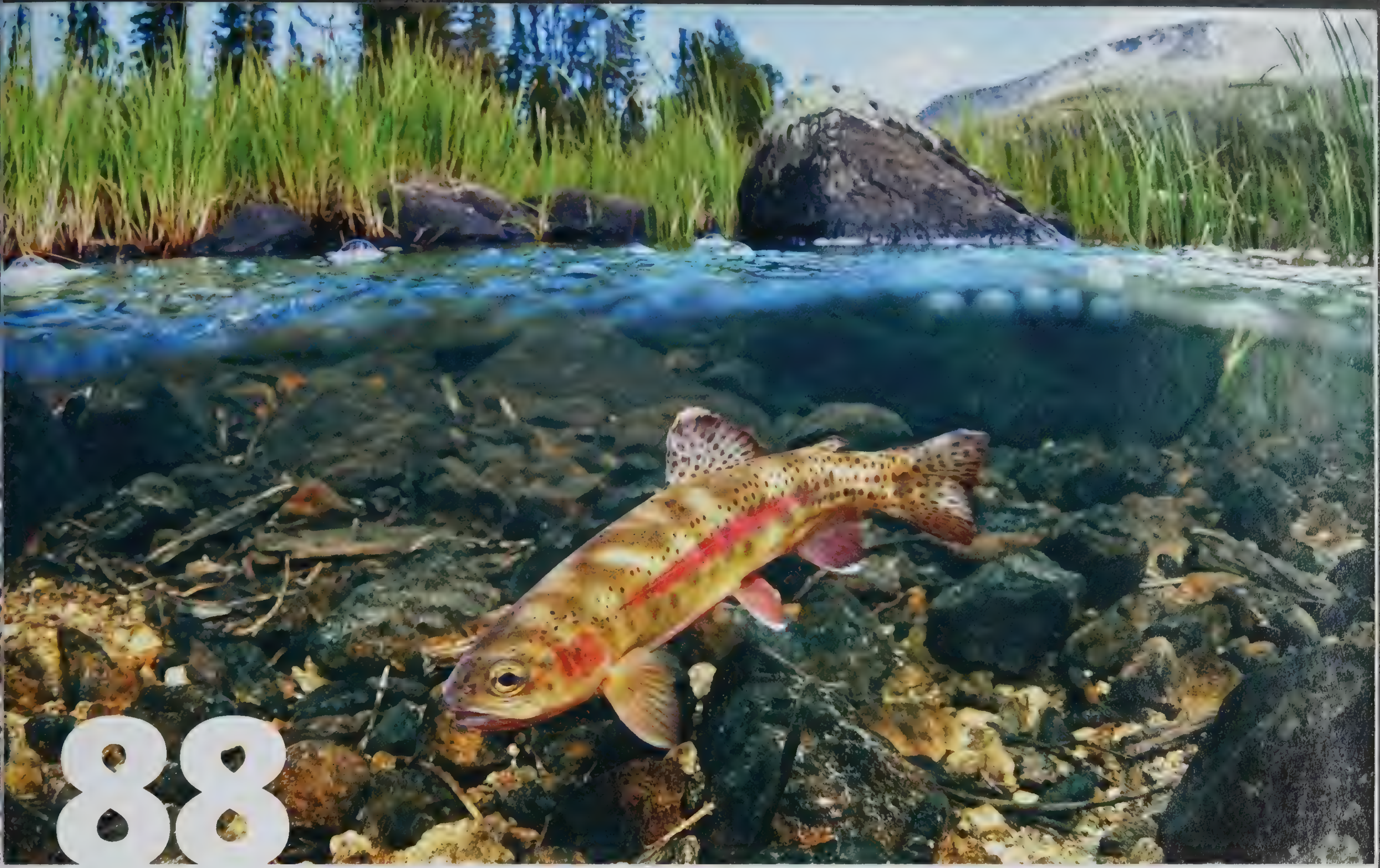
▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "The Lower Yellowstone's Untapped Potential," March-April 2022.

When: Year round for hiking and raptor watching, and summer through fall for floating and fishing, after spring floodwaters subside. Surrounding uplands are good for hunting in the fall.

Where: See access sites on a map of the lower Yellowstone in the March-April 2022 article "The Lower Yellowstone's Untapped Potential" (see QR code at right).

Maps: FWP recently produced a new lower Yellowstone River guide with detailed river maps. View it at issuu.com/montanaoutdoors/docs/lower_yellowstone_guide_web.

FROM TOP: ANDY AUSTIN/MONTANA STATE PARKS; NATHAN COOPER



88

Catch a golden trout

These beautiful California salmonids were first introduced to Montana in 1907 and today swim in roughly 20 high mountain lakes in western and south-central Montana. Though not native, the fish are fun to catch, delicious to eat, and lovely to see.

Where: One popular spot is Sylvan Lake in the Beartooth Mountains, up Forest Trail 13 from the East Rosebud Campground south of Absarokee. Find Montana's other golden trout lakes and streams at fwp.mt.gov/fish.

When: Early summer right after ice-out when trout are close to shore. Also check inlet and outlet streams. Mornings and evenings are best.

▸ *Suggested by John "Timmer" Reeves, Butte; and Chuck Blackburn, Billings*

BOB
MARSHALL
WILDERNESS
LEWIS & CLARK
National
Forest

[illegible] TROY SMITH

89

Backpack into a wilderness area

On page 34 we list backpacking as a classic Montana outdoors activity. Consider stepping that up a notch by making a trip into one of the state's 16 designated wilderness areas (15 federal and one tribal). Conservationists, including New Yorker Bob Marshall, fought for decades to protect these hallowed grounds from oil and gas development, roads, and motorized vehicles. Wilderness areas are wild, quiet, and scenic. Many are also home to Canada lynx, wolverines, and grizzly bears. You likely won't see any of these reclusive predators, but it's a thrill knowing they're there.

When: Wilderness areas are best visited in mid- to late summer. Always carry accessible bear spray.

Where: Most are in western and central Montana. For general maps and information, visit thearmchairexplorer.com/montana/montana-wilderness-areas.php and wildmontana.org/public-lands-101/wilderness-areas/.

90 Fish a high mountain trout lake

Before the 1992 movie *A River Runs Through It* seared big-river fly-fishing into the public consciousness, one of the quintessential Montana angling experiences was to hike to a high mountain lake, fish for trout, and enjoy a meal of fresh fish. It's still a great adventure. Montana has more than 1,000 mountain lakes with productive trout fisheries. Most were first stocked starting in the early 1900s by state horse packers and hikers carrying fish in milk cans. Many lakes are self-sustaining, with fish spawning in tributaries. FWP stocks hundreds of others (especially those most accessible to anglers) every three to six years.

When: The best fishing is from late June through early September. Before and after that, mountain trails usually have too much snow.

Where: Throughout western and south-central Montana's mountain ranges. Contact FWP regional offices in Billings, Bozeman, Missoula, and Kalispell and ask for their most up-to-date regional guide to mountain lakes.

- *Suggested by Dan Frost, Bozeman*
- Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "High Altitude Trout," May-June 2012.

Backcountry lake in the Pioneer Mountains

91 Visit Chief Plenty Coups State Park

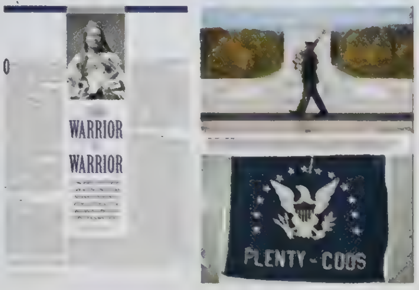
If you're looking for somewhere to feel at peace, this quiet, remote, tree-shaded park 40 miles south of Billings is the place. The site, donated to the public by the great Apsáalooke warrior, contains not only his home (a National Historic Landmark), but also a visitor center and museum that tells the inspiring story of the Crow people's westward movement into today's Montana. Many visitors say they were moved after learning about the great chief and his lifelong mission to make peace between American Indians and whites.

When: The park is open daily in summer and Wednesday through Sunday the rest of the year. Visit stateparks.mt.gov for more information.

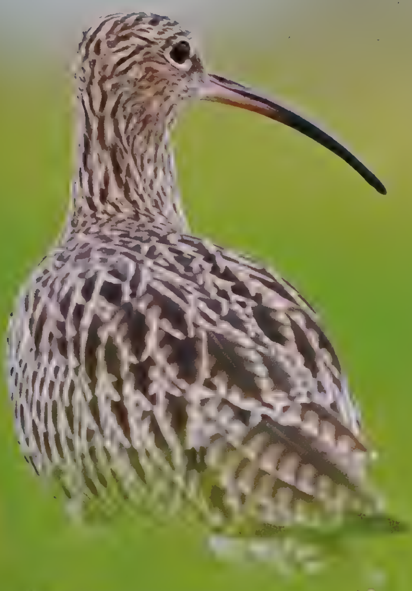
Where: From Billings, head about 35 miles south on Highway 416, then 418 to Pryor. Signs there lead to the park.

▸ *Suggested by Linda Weirather, Vancouver, WA*

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "From Warrior to Warrior," November-December 2021.



92 See a long-billed curlew or marbled godwit


Long-billed "curl-low"

You might not believe your eyes the first time you spot a long-billed curlew. Its namesake beak is so extraordinarily long you'll think the bird might tip over forward. Standing 2 feet tall with a 3-foot wingspan, North America's largest shorebird has long legs and buff plumage and lives in shortgrass prairies or rangelands across Montana.

Nearly as striking is the marbled godwit, a shorebird that's a tad smaller and buff-colored too. The godwit also has a long bill, arching slightly upward compared to the curlew's slightly downward curve. (A memory device for remembering which is which: curlews' bills "curl-low.")

When: Both birds are most active during their breeding season: April for curlews and May for godwits.

Where: Curlews nest in shortgrass prairie and rangelands mainly east of the Continental Divide. Marbled godwits prefer shortgrass prairie next to wetlands, also primarily east of the Divide. At dawn, listen for both species' distinctive calls, which you can learn by listening to YouTube videos.

Suggested by [illegible]

93 Take one of Montana's great day hikes

Montana is packed with countless spectacular day hikes. Here are seven of our favorites, including distance and closest major town or city:

- **Bitter Creek**, 3–6 miles, Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area (Glasgow)
- **Glacier Lake**, 4 miles roundtrip, Custer Gallatin National Forest (Red Lodge)
- **Mann Gulch**, 10.4 miles roundtrip, Gates of the Mountains Wilderness (Helena)
- **Hyalite Creek and Lake**, 3 to 11 miles roundtrip, Custer Gallatin National Forest (Bozeman)
- **Our Lake**, 6 miles roundtrip, Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (Choteau)
- **Blodgett Canyon Overlook**, 3 miles roundtrip, Bitterroot National Forest (Hamilton)
- **Mount Aeneas Loop**, 6-mile loop, Jewel Basin, Swan Mountains (Kalispell)

When: July through September.

Where: See *Montana Outdoors* article below for travel details.

▸ *Suggested by Lisa Contrado, Kalispell*

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "10 Trails You Have to Try," July-August 2010.

10 TRAILS
YOU HAVE TO TRY
MOUNT AENEAS LOOP

94 Identify all three bluebird species

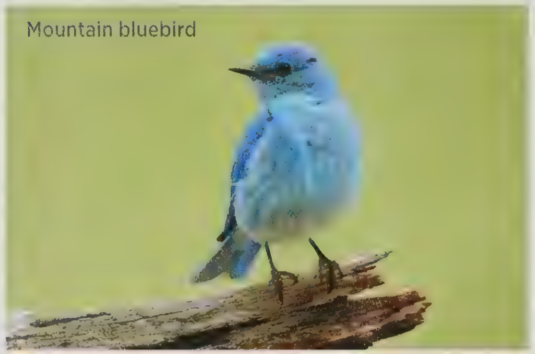
Montana is one of only a few states with summer populations of all three North American bluebird species: mountain, western, and eastern. The diversity reflects the state's widely varying landscape, from coniferous forests to northern Great Plains grasslands. The females are tough to tell apart, but the males are more easily distinguished: The mountain bluebird is completely bright blue from head to tail; the western has an orange chest with a dark blue head, throat, wings, and tail and a gray belly; and the eastern sports an orange chest and throat with dark blue head, wings, and tail and a white belly.

Where: Mountain bluebirds are common statewide in open areas with tree cavities nearby for nesting. Westerns are found in the western third of Montana in open ponderosa pine woodlands. Look for easterns in eastern Montana in open woodlands near human habitation. All three species are common where people erect bluebird nest boxes.

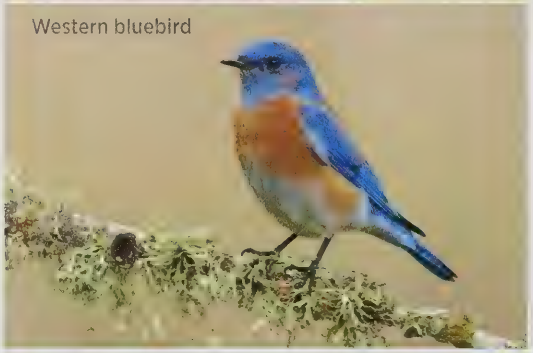
When: Mountain bluebirds can be seen from February through November; western and eastern from late March through early October.

Read the *Montana Outdoors* article:
"Turf War Twist,"
March-April 2014.

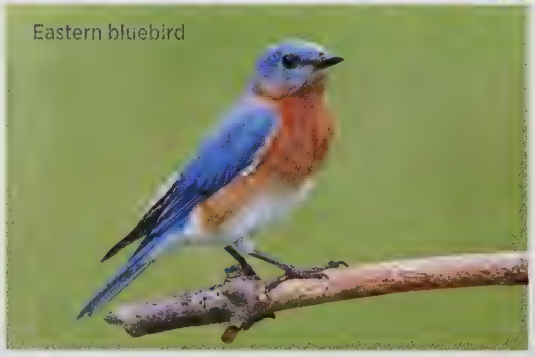
Mountain bluebird



Western bluebird



Eastern bluebird



95 Hike Refrigerator Canyon Trail on a hot day

The oppressive heat often makes it difficult to hike in Montana in mid- to late summer. But not in Refrigerator Canyon, a 45-minute drive northeast of Helena. Even in July, temperatures there often stay down in the 60s well into the afternoon. Several requisite shallow stream crossings add to the relief. Upon emerging from the chilly limestone canyon, hikers quickly warm in the sunlight as they travel through forest then prairie on this 18-mile out-and-back route. Note that after the stream in the canyon there's no water, so carry some. Also, bring bear spray.

When: Best in midsummer.

Where: From Helena, take York Road (Highway 280) east 20 miles to York. Turn left on the gravel Nelson Road until it Ts at narrow Beaver Creek Road (FR 138). Then go right and continue about 10 more miles. The trailhead is on your left.

CANYON PHOTO: LUKE DURAN. BLUEBIRD PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

96 Visit the nation's longest buffalo jump

First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park and National Historic Landmark contains what is considered the longest bison cliff jump in the United States. For at least 1,000 years before Lewis and Clark passed nearby, Indigenous people stampeded bison off steep edges of the 1-mile-long sandstone cliff. Those stationed at the foot of the cliff killed injured buffalo then butchered and skinned the carcasses, providing food, clothing, and tools for entire tribes. The park, about 20 miles southwest of Great Falls and previously known as Ulm Pishkun, has a visitor center and museum that pays homage to the people who have honored bison for centuries, and also offers hiking trails and prairie bird-watching opportunities.

When: Open daily in summer and Wednesday through Sunday in winter. For more information, call the park at 406-866-2217.

Where: The park is 7 miles north of Ulm on Ulm Vaughn Road. In summer, watch out for rattlesnakes.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article: "Where the Buffalo Fell," September-October 2003. Note that the park changed its name from Ulm Pishkun to First Peoples Buffalo Jump several years after that article was written. Look for an updated article on the park in the September-October 2022 issue.

97 Visit the Terry Badlands

When people think "wilderness," they might envision forested mountain backcountry with snowcapped peaks in the distance. But this federal wilderness study area sits in an arid, rocky landscape devoid of mountains. Yet the scenery lacks for nothing. The striking sandstone bridges, spires, tabletops, and buttes divided by deep gullies have been formed by millions of years of wind and water erosion. In addition to the geologic formations are Native American, U.S. Army, and early pioneer historical sites. Camp at the Terry Badlands overlook across the Yellowstone River from the town of Terry to view awesome sunrises and sunsets.

When: Midsummer to early fall. Note that dirt roads here are often impassable when wet.

Where: 3 miles northwest of Terry in southeastern Montana. Directions and other visitor information at blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/montana-dakotas/terry-badlands-wsa.

▸ *Suggested by William Thompson, Hamilton; and Nikki Yancey, Billings*

98

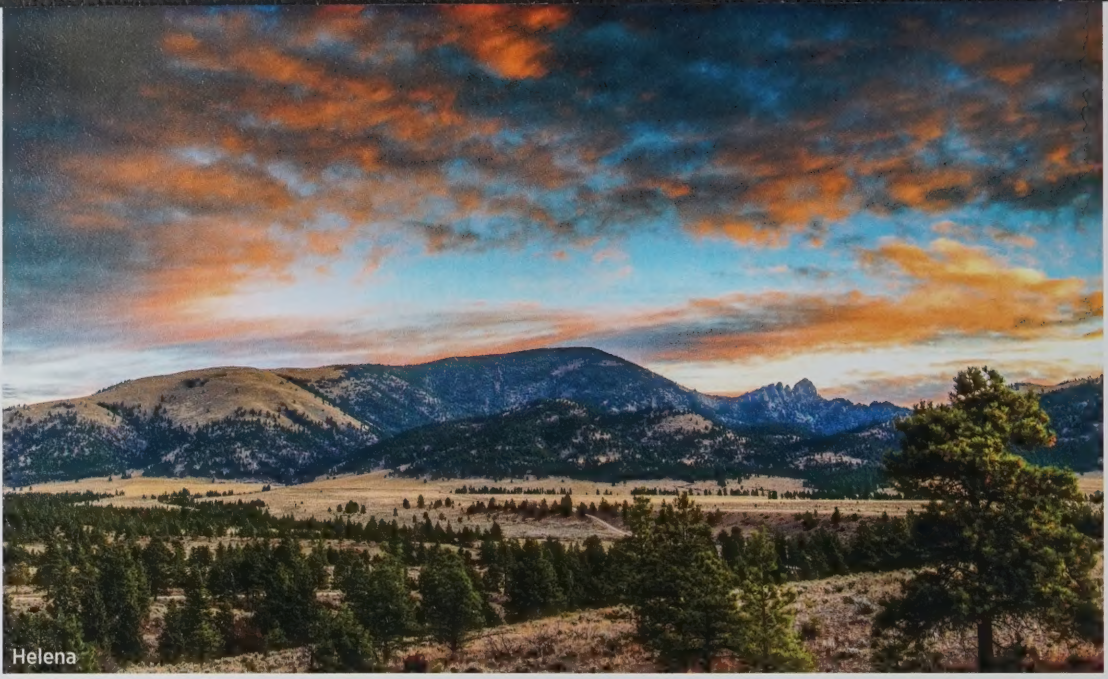
See Montana's two Sleeping Giants

The Helena giant, locally dubbed "Sleepy G," rests north of the state capital on a stretch of I-15 known as Sieben Flats. This igneous rock formation is visible from throughout the city. If you drive I-15 north, you can watch the giant first disappear then reappear even larger a few miles later when you reach the flats. For thousands of years, the formation has also been called the Bear's Tooth or Beartooth (as in the nearby Beartooth Wildlife Management Area).

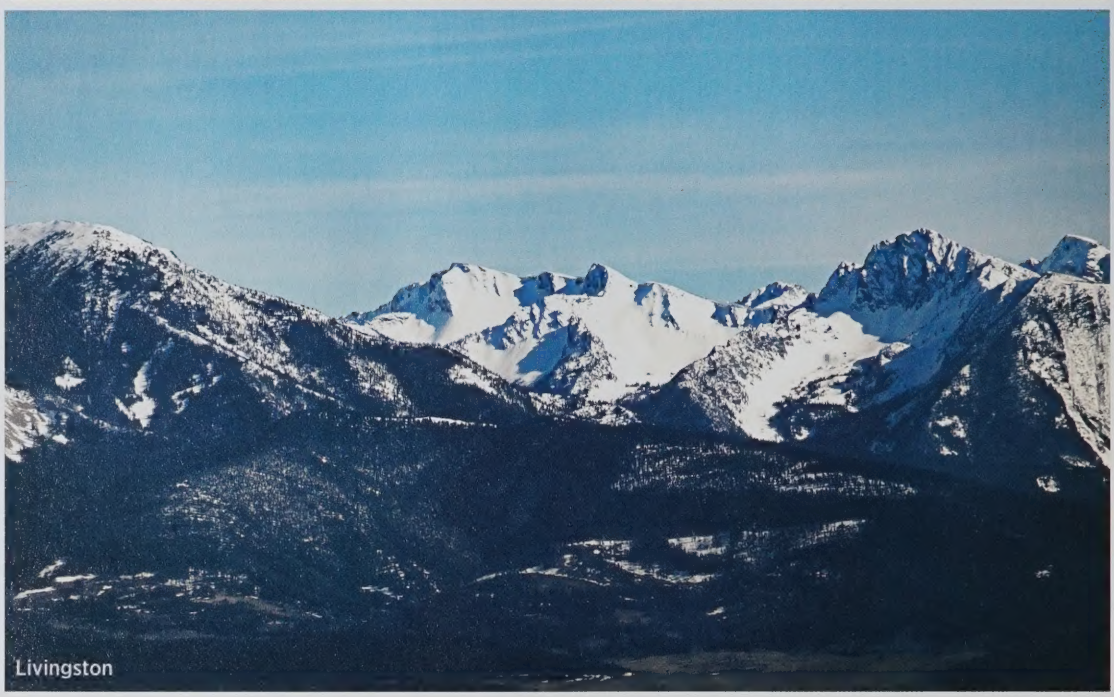
While Helena's giant is a silhouette, Livingston's is in 3-D—when afternoon shadows accentuate his eyebrows, nostrils, and chin. This Sleeping Giant is visible to the southeast from many parts of town, though the best view is straight down Main Street looking south. The giant's chest (or bust?) is formed by Livingston Peak, the northernmost peak of the Absaroka Range.

When: Clear days anytime of year.

Where: Helena and Livingston.



Helena



Livingston

FROM TOP: KEVIN LEAGUE; JODY DURAN

99

Pan for sapphires and hunt for moss agates

Montana has designated two official state gemstones: the sapphire and the moss agate.

Montana produces more gem-quality sapphires than anywhere else in North America. Most valuable is the Yogo variety, a striking blue sapphire found mainly in Yogo Gulch of the Little Belt Mountains. Others, known collectively as "Montana sapphires" and ranging in color from pale yellow to light blue, are mined elsewhere in western Montana.

Moss agates are semi-precious gemstones created from silicon dioxide. The colors are formed due to trace amounts of metal, such as chrome or iron, that produce different colors depending on their state of oxidation. Cutting and polishing the agates reveals their striking colors and patterns.

When: Mine for sapphires and search for moss agates in summer.

Where: There are several mines where visitors can pay to "sluice"—strain water through gravel—for sapphires and the more common (and less valuable) garnets. Yogos are primarily found in Judith Basin County, about 30 minutes southwest of Lewistown near Utica. Search online for "Montana sapphire mining." For moss agates, hunt beaches and sandbars on the lower Yellowstone River either by boat or via FWP fishing access sites. No pass or license required. Go online to see what they look like uncut.

▸ *Suggested by Bert Fredrickson, Seattle, WA; and Beth Anderson, Dillon*

PHOTOS: WIKIPEDIA

A MONTANA OUTDOORS

BEST 100

PUBLICATION

☐ 1. Visit Sun River WMA
☐ 2. See sandhill cranes perform their mating dance
☐ 3. Hear an elk bugle
☐ 4. Smell a ponderosa pine
☐ 5. See a moose
☐ 6. Hike to an alpine lake
☐ 7. Pick a quart of morel mushrooms
☐ 8. View Egg Mountain
☐ 9. See a prairie dog town
☐ 10. Fly-fish the Blackfoot
☐ 11. See western grebes conducting their rushing ceremony
☐ 12. Hunt a Block Management Area
☐ 13. Observe mountain goats
☐ 14. Fish with a guide
☐ 15. Watch mule deer "stot"
☐ 16. See the northern lights
☐ 17. See a running pronghorn herd
☐ 18. Walk along the Old North Trail
☐ 19. Visit the Varney Bridge section of the Madison River

See inside cover for link to this list.

☐ 20. Learn to cast a fly rod
☐ 21. Learn to read a topo map
☐ 22. Visit a pishkun (buffalo jump)
☐ 23. Hike while carrying bear pepper spray
☐ 24. See the Chinese Wall
☐ 25. Drive around Flathead Lake
☐ 26. Visit a hunter check station in November
☐ 27. Get stuck in gumbo
☐ 28. See a burrowing owl
☐ 29. Visit Bighorn Canyon
☐ 30. Backpack the famous Beartooth Traverse
☐ 31. Catch a walleye
☐ 32. See the world's largest western larch
☐ 33. Fish all of Montana's blue-ribbon rivers
☐ 34. See a swift fox
☐ 35. Float the Smith
☐ 36. See beargrass in bloom
☐ 37. Look for shed antlers
☐ 38. Go ice fishing
☐ 39. Admire William Clark's signature at Pompeys Pillar
☐ 40. Ask permission to hunt private land
☐ 41. Call in a tom turkey
☐ 42. Hike to Grinnell Glacier
☐ 43. See the fall golden eagle migration at Rogers Pass or Bridger Mountain Ridge
☐ 44. Go on an outfitted backcountry trip
☐ 45. Spot a white-tailed ptarmigan
☐ 46. Hear a wolf howl
☐ 47. See Kootenai Falls
☐ 48. Catch an Arctic grayling in the Big Hole River
☐ 49. See the Giant Springs
☐ 50. Visit an ancient tipi ring
☐ 51. Hike up Square Butte
☐ 52. Spot a mountain lion track
☐ 53. Fish Nelson Reservoir
☐ 54. See the snow geese at Freezeout Lake
☐ 55. Visit Fort Peck Dam
☐ 56. Pick a quart of huckleberries
☐ 57. Learn to row a drift boat
☐ 58. Snag a paddlefish
☐ 59. "Play" the Ringing Rocks
☐ 60. Bike the Hiawatha Trail
☐ 61. Hunt upland birds over a pointing dog
☐ 62. See a long-billed curlew
☐ 63. Drive Going-to-the-Sun Road
☐ 64. Float the Missouri River White Cliffs area
☐ 65. Fish the Mother's Day caddis hatch
☐ 66. See bighorns at Koo-Koo-Sint Viewing Site
☐ 67. Catch a Columbia River interior redband trout
☐ 68. Go elk hunting
☐ 69. See sage-grouse and sharptails on their spring mating grounds
☐ 70. Join the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count
☐ 71. See quaking aspen in fall
☐ 72. Tie a fly
☐ 73. Walk under the Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park
☐ 74. See (and hear) a prairie rattlesnake
☐ 75. Hike a prairie in June
☐ 76. Catch a westslope cutthroat trout
☐ 77. Explore Lewis and Clark Caverns
☐ 78. Fish a lazy warmwater river
☐ 79. Take the CMR National Wildlife Refuge auto tour
☐ 80. See a greater short-horned lizard
☐ 81. Visit the Ross Creek cedars
☐ 82. See evidence of Glacial Lake Missoula
☐ 83. Cook in a dutch oven
☐ 84. Visit a prairie pothole
☐ 85. See the Madison River Canyon Earthquake Area
☐ 86. Hear a loon call
☐ 87. Fish the salmonfly hatch
☐ 88. Float the South Fork of the Flathead
☐ 89. Collect a moss agate
☐ 90. See wild bison at the National Bison Range Wildlife Refuge
☐ 91. Fish the Blackfeet Indian Reservation lakes for monster rainbows
☐ 92. See harlequin ducks
☐ 93. See wild mustangs
☐ 94. Drive the Beartooth All-American Road
☐ 95. Spot a grizzly
☐ 96. Visit the badlands and rock formations of Makoshika and Medicine Rocks State Parks
☐ 97. See a western tanager
☐ 98. See bitterroot in bloom
☐ 99. Visit Red Rock Lakes NWR
☐ 100. Soak in a hot spring

What have you been missing?

These checklists show the *Montana Outdoors* recommended top 200 things to see, do, and learn to fully experience the Treasure State's outdoors. View the lists, check the boxes, tally your total, and see how you measure up:

150–200: We are not worthy! You are rocking Montana's natural worlds.
100–149: Awesome, and there's room here for even more adventures.
50–99: A great start. Maybe branch out and learn some new skills?
0–49: Lucky you. You've had the chance to sample some of what Montana offers. Even more wondrous outdoor experiences await.

MONTANA OUTDOORS

NEXT 100

SPECIAL ISSUE

☐ 1. See a porcupine
☐ 2. Take a whitewater rafting day trip
☐ 3. Catch crappies at Tongue River Reservoir State Park
☐ 4. Visit Natural Bridge Falls
☐ 5. Go snowmobiling
☐ 6. Cross the whole shebang
☐ 7. Find a bison skull
☐ 8. See the massive bighorn sheep at Wild Horse Island
☐ 9. Learn to identify 20 trees and shrubs
☐ 10. Swim in Brush Lake in August
☐ 11. Spot a loon
☐ 12. Learn about David Thompson
☐ 13. Go mountain biking
☐ 14. Find evidence of Montana's "West Coast"
☐ 15. Join a conservation organization
☐ 16. Explore a ghost town
☐ 17. Pick a bucket of serviceberries or chokecherries
☐ 18. Attend an Indian powwow
☐ 19. Hike the CDT
☐ 20. Bike the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route
☐ 21. Visit bigskyfishing.com
☐ 22. Visit the Museum of the Plains Indian
☐ 23. Hike to Woodbine Falls
☐ 24. Learn 10 constellations and planets
☐ 25. Learn to identify 20 native wildflowers
☐ 26. Welcome vultures home to Makoshika
☐ 27. Stay in a U.S. Forest Service cabin
☐ 28. Learn to shoot (at a range)
☐ 29. Watch an osprey catch (or carry) a fish
☐ 30. Ride a horse
☐ 31. Follow the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
☐ 32. Find an arrowhead
☐ 33. Go tent camping
☐ 34. Give the one-finger wave on a rural road
☐ 35. Hike Belt Creek in Sluice Boxes State Park
☐ 36. See a mourning cloak butterfly
☐ 37. Go cross-country skiing
☐ 38. Start a one-match fire
☐ 39. Learn about the Big Burn
☐ 40. Visit an abandoned one-room schoolhouse
☐ 41. Go snowshoeing
☐ 42. Visit the C.M. Russell Museum
☐ 43. See a beaverslide stacker
☐ 44. See where movies were filmed in Montana
☐ 45. Hike the Crazies
☐ 46. Seine a stream or lake
☐ 47. Buy a DeLorme *Montana Gazetteer*
☐ 48. Watch a meteor shower
☐ 49. See the darkest skies
☐ 50. Hike Glacier's Highline Trail
☐ 51. Go snorkelling
☐ 52. Visit an FWP office and Montana WILD
☐ 53. Go backpacking
☐ 54. Watch cowboys move cattle
☐ 55. Visit Crystal Park
☐ 56. Experience a prairie blizzard
☐ 57. See a petrified forest
☐ 58. Visit an old rural cemetery
☐ 59. Drive a scenic route
☐ 60. Visit the Berkeley Pit
☐ 61. Paddle the Flathead Marine Trail
☐ 62. Visit Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
☐ 63. Follow the Montana Dino Trail
☐ 64. Hike or cycle the Milwaukee Road Rail Trail
☐ 65. Listen to frogs and toads
☐ 66. Explore an ice cave
☐ 67. Paddle the Clearwater River Canoe Trail
☐ 68. Visit the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site
☐ 69. Follow the Nez Perce (*Nimíipuu*) National Historic Trail
☐ 70. Witness the "bubble display" of a courting male ruddy duck
☐ 71. Hit Montana's chickadee and warbler hotspots
☐ 72. See and hear bighorn rams in combat
☐ 73. Visit Montana's Lake Como
☐ 74. See trumpeter swans
☐ 75. Hike to Devil's Glen on the Dearborn River
☐ 76. Buy guns, ammo, fishing gear, or duck stamps
☐ 77. Attend a rodeo
☐ 78. Resubscribe to *Montana Outdoors*
☐ 79. Take one of Montana's three ferries
☐ 80. See a snowshoe hare or white-tailed jackrabbit
☐ 81. Take a bat cruise or bat hike
☐ 82. Find a pileated woodpecker
☐ 83. Attend the Milk River Catfish Classic
☐ 84. Watch the Race to the Sky
☐ 85. See Hungry Horse and Libby dams
☐ 86. Visit Pictograph Cave State Park
☐ 87. Float the Lower Yellowstone
☐ 88. Catch a golden trout
☐ 89. Backpack into a wilderness area
☐ 90. Fish a high mountain trout lake
☐ 91. Visit Chief Plenty Coups State Park
☐ 92. See a long-billed curlew or marbled godwit
☐ 93. Take one of Montana's great day hikes
☐ 94. Identify all three bluebird species
☐ 95. Hike Refrigerator Canyon Trail on a hot day
☐ 96. Visit the nation's longest buffalo jump
☐ 97. Visit the Terry Badlands
☐ 98. See Montana's two Sleeping Giants
☐ 99. Pan for sapphires and hunt for moss agates
☐ 100. Attend Bannack Days

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100 Attend Bannack Days

New Orleans has Mardi Gras, New York City celebrates New Year's Eve, and southwestern Montana holds its very own Bannack Days. We think we have the better party.

Held the third full weekend in July, Bannack Days celebrates pioneer life at the site of Montana's first major gold discovery in 1862 and its first territorial capital, now a state park and National Historic Landmark.

Bannack contains more than 60 original structures, including the Meade Hotel, governor's mansion, Masonic Hall, and Methodist Church. During Bannack Days, the ghost town comes alive with old-time musicians, gunslingers, and other characters in period clothing and offers craft demonstrations like tinsmithing, mule packing, and barbering, plus hands-on activities like panning for "gold" and soap making. It looks like a town scene from *Lonesome Dove*.

The park holds two other celebrations each year: Even more period reenactors return during the four-day Living History Weekend in September, and in late October the spooky Ghost Walks can intrigue even the most cynical eye-rolling teenager ("Is that Dorothy Dunne over there by the graveyard?"). The park is also open for regular visitation year round.

When: Third full weekend in July. Weekend admission is $5 per person, kids under 8 free.

Where: About a half-hour west of Dillon off Highway 278. For more information, call 406-834-3413 or visit fwp.mt.gov/stateparks/Bannack.

▸ Read the *Montana Outdoors* article:
"Where the West Comes Alive,"
September-October 2019.

WHERE THE WEST COMES ALIVE

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